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## BURNT POWDER;

OR,  
THE YOUNG ARMY DETECTIVE.

A TALE OF THE SLAUGHTER AT SPOTTSYLVANIA.

By ANTHONY P. MORRIS.

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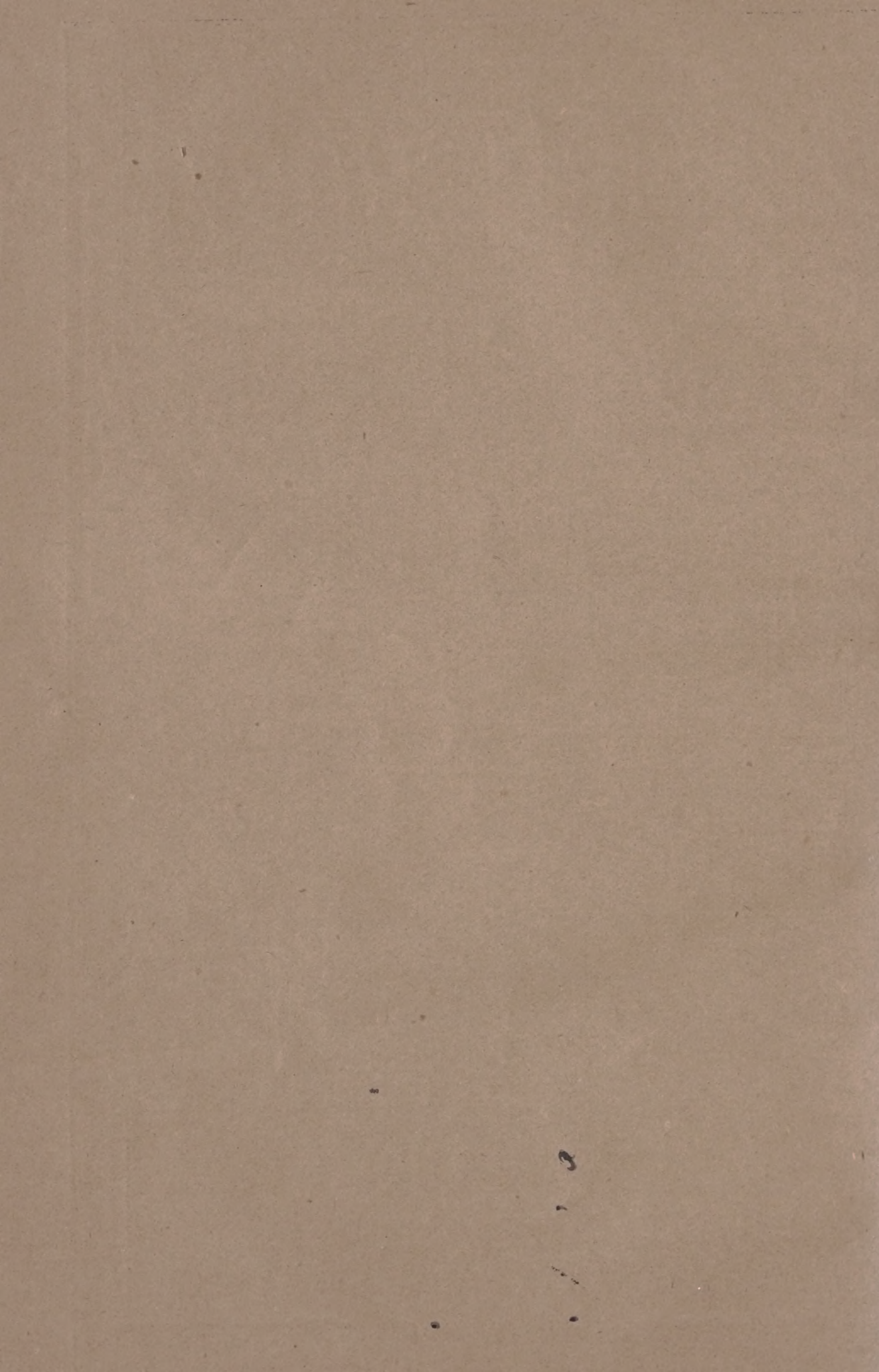
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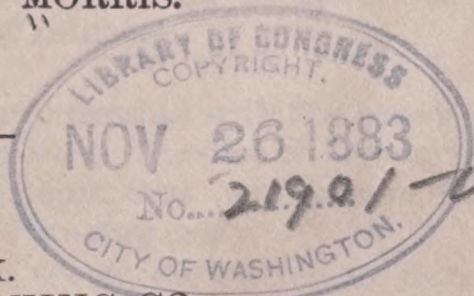
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NEW YORK.  
NOVELIST PUBLISHING CO.,  
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# BURNT POWDER.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE WEIRD BEACON BUILDER.

Our story opens in the month of May, 1864.

The thunders of the Wilderness were yet lingering in the sullen air; the dense and gloomy woods were heaped with slain, and still the armies of Grant and Lee held stubbornly to the terrible combat which history itself has hesitated to describe.

The thousands of heroes who had fallen in that battle below the Rapidan, without having accomplished any favorable result, at last showed the Union general how pitiably useless was the fight, and on this Saturday the orders for a new movement had gone forth.

The Union army must plant itself between Lee and Richmond.

The objective point was Spottsylvania Court House.

The trains were moving toward Chancellorsville to park; the corps of Warren, Sedgwick and Hancock were in motion; the Brock road bristled with the vast lines of the boys in blue, who felt that from the carnage among a foe that had fought from comparative invisibility, they were on the eve of another mighty struggle, wherein another record of fallen thousands was in store.

On the right clanked the sabers and thudded the hoofs of Sheridan's cavalry, and the jangling accouterments of Hammond's mounted men sounded in the wake of Hancock.

On to Spottsylvania Court House.

And while this scene by night was progressing with the Army of the Potomac, another scene, of interest to the plot of the narrative to ensue, was transpiring at a point that would soon fall directly in the line of march of the advancing army.

A hill pantalooned by trees and its access obstructed by dense undergrowth; its top like a bald knob of stone-strewn turf.

At the ascending verge where the woody growth seemed to end as by the sudden sweep of some colossal scythe, a denser copse,



with taller trees, marked the presence of a gushing spring. At one side of this spring, as if hurled there by some bursted meteorite of the skies, a jagged and massive rock.

On top of this rock, in a cup worn there by nature, burned a weird fire—weird and faint, like the dull orb of Saturn shining in the damp haze of an autumn night.

Beside the beacon a figure whose aspect in the unearthly halo was one of both astounding and terrifying mold.

Tall as a giant was he—his form straight as ever nature fashioned the human frame.

At first glance his age would have seemed to be fully eighty years; but the erect body, the keen and terribly brilliant eyes, indicated that he was a man yet in the prime of life.

His garb was a patchwork of rags.

Below the tatters of sleeves that reached no further than the elbows, were brawny arms of powerful muscle; below the rent breeches that came no further than his knees, were limbs that seemed molded in sinews of iron. Down from his bronzed face streamed a mass of white and tangled hair, like a bushy ripple of snow, and on his head were sparse white locks, though long, streaming backward from a high forehead.

Around his waist he wore a broad leather belt, on the brass buckle-plate of which were the letters, "C. S. A.," and protruding from the upper rim of the belt were several pistols and knives, the latter without sheaths.

Thus plentifully armed, and wild of mein as he was, he presented a picture that would awe, if not frighten, the beholder.

From his point of observation he could see the guide fires of the approaching army over the tree tops, beyond the woods and clearings, and anon he would shade his unearthly, sparkling eyes with one of his huge hands, as if to pierce the gloom and see the moving mass that flitted, glided, turned like gigantic snakes afar off.

"They are coming," he muttered, in a strange voice. "Curse them all—the blue and the gray. Why could I not be left alone where I have fled to escape mankind? I hate them. All are my enemies. They have intruded on me here, in the one quiet spot I had selected in the great earth to call my own; and oh! but I have made them pay! Tolls of blood—tolls of blood are mine to gather! I hate and I can kill! I will not be driven out by either, without exacting my pay—pay of blood. Ay, curse them! Oh, that I could call down on them the fury of the tempest, the bolt of quick lightning, the quake of thunders to rive the earth beneath and swallow them all—all!" and in a moment of transient frenzy the wild being raised and shook his half bare arms aloft at the skies, grinding together his teeth that seemed to be like the teeth of a dog, strong and fangy.

While he had stood there absorbed with trying to see the army



afar whose lights were so plainly visible, another form was on the bald knob of that eminence, unknown to the strange creature.

A man had appeared on the verge of the fringing trees, as if making his way toward some point beyond.

The suit of gray told that he was a Confederate; and we, who are supposed to know each inner *motif* of the recital yet to come, may say that this second personage on the hill was one of Anderson's corps—the corps instructed by Lee to be ready for moving in the morning to intercept Grant; but which, because of a combination of circumstances, had not waited till morning, being then on the way to Spottsylvania Court House.

His uniform betokened the rank of an officer, a captain of the gray clad host.

Outside the moving corps of Anderson, he with a company was performing the duty of movable or scouting pickets, and by a chance observing this singularly located fire, had himself toiled up the short ascent to ascertain its meaning.

The position of the Confederate captain, as he came to the top of the hill, was at the rear of the tall and white-haired giant in rags.

He paused, staring in some astonishment at the vision, and from under a bushy beard ejaculated:

"Guns of fire, what's that?"

The giant at that instant appeared to make a discovery.

Quickly from his broad belt he snatched and cocked a monstrous revolver.

For a few seconds he paused to listen.

He slowly raised the weapon, bringing it to an aim upon a spot some distance below him.

Then another pause, as if he hesitated to fire.

"Ho!" aspirated from the hairy lips of the watching captain, "whoever the lunatic may be, I see that he is about to send a bullet down there where I left my men. Flay me! but I would like to capture this fellow, to find out who or what he is."

With the resolution to accomplish this, he sprung, soft-footed and rapidly, forward.

At the same time the strange being seemed to have settled in his mind where he wished to send the bullet from his heavy revolver, and already his finger was pressing the trigger, when he was startled by a rough hand on his arm and a gruff voice, that said, in a loud tone:

"Hello! guns and fire, who the deuce are you, anyhow—crazy?"

The other turned—turned with a low, angry cry, and thrusting the weapon into the face of the one who had intruded upon his intention to fire into the suspicious spot below.

The weapon exploded,



The bullet went wide of its mark in the grasp that was dextrously transferred to his wrist.

The next instant the Confederate captain had his hands full in a manner that he had evidently not calculated on.

The limbs with muscles of iron planted hard on the pebbly turf; the arms with sinews of steel gripped around the captain's waist, pinioning his own arms tightly to his side, and treating him to a hug that was like the embrace of some enormous bear; and then he was lifted bodily and hurled to one side, rolling, sprawling, squirming, with his senses nearly knocked out by a painful twist of the neck.

Spryly regaining his feet, and mad with rage, he drew his sword and sprung back to the spot that his whirling brain could not but confusedly locate.

"Flay me! but I'll have your life for that, you dog—whoever you are!" he howled.

But he stood alone.

His antagonist of the minute before had disappeared.

While he stood, with whirling faculties and cursing the one who had so summarily disposed of him, there was a tramp of approaching feet to one side.

Presently he was joined by three soldiers of his company, who came forward on a run, as if they had witnessed the singular encounter and were hastening to the assistance of their captain.

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## CHAPTER II.

### AN INVISIBLE ASSASSIN.

Captain Sam Sparl was a man of fierce, and at times brutal disposition. His men feared him.

As he stood there, after the strange Hercules had so completely worsted him, his head was ringing, his vision was swimming with stars, though he had made the almost mechanical effort which we have seen, to return for combat with the mysterious dweller of the hills.

One of those men who, with all their brutish ways, are not lacking in a certain degree of bulldog daring

Upon the heads of his followers now fell the brunt of his rage—rage that was aroused by the clinging pains in his jarred, red frame.

"Ho, there!" he snarled, chokingly hoarse, as if the thump of his body on the ground had filled his throat with a strangle of blood. "You tardy whelps! why did you not come sooner? Where have you been lurking? Did you not see that fellow—big as a mountain, strong as an ox, crazy as a scalded ant?"

"We saw him, captain."

"Oh, you did?" with a spiteful snap.

"Yes, and hurried all we could—"



"All you could! And that was in time to be of no service. Why did you not fire upon him? Why not blow the top of his head off as soon as you saw me go down? Fury and fire! my head is as big as a keg! I am bruised to my heels! Why did you not riddle him, I say?"

"Why, cap, you yourself said that the first man who fired a gun to betray that we were moving about in the hills, you would mow him down with your sword."

"So I did," he gnashed. "All the same, I wish you had disregarded the order and brought down a hundred Yankee skirmishers sooner than let that wild bug go scot free after banging me over the ground as he did."

But for the order the men would have certainly fired upon the wild-looking being who had so easily overcame the captain.

Sparl had to be somewhat mollified by this reminder; nevertheless he continued to fume while brushing the dirt from his uniform:

"I would give much to know who the 'cursed vagabond can be. And if ever I meet him again—fire and guns!—I'll spit him on my sword without asking him any questions."

A moment later he said:

"Come, we will continue on the errand we started upon."

Sheathing his sword with a savage push, he wheeled from the spot, followed by his men.

When his back was turned, they exchanged sly winks. For, to tell the truth, the recent singular encounter had afforded them some amusement.

As they moved downward and toward the fringe of woods, a pair of brilliant, wolf-like eyes were watching them from a thick bush at the opposite side, and a bonzed hand was parting the branches of the bush to afford a more unobstructed view for the spying orbs.

Not far, apparently, had the mysterious personage gone after hurling Captain Sparl to the ground.

Now, when he noted their departing movement, he skulked like some specter, that was a part of the dense shadows around, away by a circuitous path amid the tangle that would presently bring him near the point where he judged they must pass.

"Can any one of you imagine who that lunatic was?" demanded the captain, as they entered the nearly impenetrable gloom of the trees.

"Oh, I can do that, cap," said one, with a familiarity that showed the terms on which he permitted his men to be.

"Who, then, is he?"

"As to just who, I nor anybody else can't say."

"Ha! you are trifling with me——"

"No, cap, on honor."



"What do you mean, then?"

"Nobody knows just who the madman is."

"He is a madman?"

"Well, I reckon. He's been livin' in these hills hereabout for a great many years. Folks call him the hermit of the hills."

"Hermit of the hills. Good. I'll run him through if ever I again have an opportunity at this hermit of the hills. Yes!"

With which dire promise for the future, the Confederate captain strode onward.

They were pursuing a western course toward Gladly Run.

A short distance and they came upon a soldier in gray who could not be seen, but who called out that ominous challenge which will halt the bravest man:

"Who comes?"

"I," answered Sparl. "Fall in. We are going further west."

The picket obeyed, dropping to the rear.

As he did so there was a strange sound. A sound like the half smothered cry of a man in deep distress, and following this, a falling body.

"What's that?" demanded Sparl, coming to a stop and turning

"Don't know, cap. Somethin's happened back there," responded one of the men, in a tone of partial awe.

Scraping together some dry leaves with his boot, and producing a lucifer, the captain stooped and presently had a faint fire dully illuminating their surroundings.

By the flame he scanned the faces of those who were gathered around him.

His bloodshot eyes made a quick discovery.

Counting the one who had within the minute joined them, there should have been four besides himself.

But he saw only three.

It had often been remarked that Captain Sparl knew every man in his company by name.

"Where's Dickerson?" he demanded, sharply.

No one answered, and the others glanced uneasily around, as if something in the air suggested the presence of a calamity.

"Take the back track," he continued, without a pause. "And stand out of the light"—throwing more leaves onto the burning pile—"so that we can see. I want no skulking to-night."

Two of the men started to obey.

They had not gone the distance of ten steps ere they stumbled over something laying stretched and prone across the path.

"Here he is, cap."

The tone of the words might have given the Confederate captain a hint that all was not right with the man named Dickerson. But he called:

"Ho, there, Dickerson! what are you up to? Come forward."

"He'll never come, cap."



"What's the matter with him?"

"He's dead."

"Fire and fury! no!"

"Yes, he is. Come and see for yourself."

Sparl hastened back to where the three were now standing over the motionless body in the path.

Producing another match, he bent and roughly turned over the head of the prostrate man for a view of his face.

It was the face of a dead man.

Around the neck there was oozing a stream of blood from a frightful gash that had nearly severed the head from the spinal column. A single stroke from a practiced hand that meant death almost instantaneously.

For a few seconds there was silence.

Again the soldiers cast uneasy glances around.

Probably they were as brave under ordinary circumstances as the brute-browed captain who led them; but this sudden and stealthy stroke of death in their midst, without any warning whatever, appalled them.

"Satan! I know who has done this!" burst from Sparl.

They spoke as one man:

"The hermit of the hills!"

At this juncture the match spluttered out, and the last flicker of the loose fire of the leaves faded.

An involuntary shiver thrilled up the back of the Confederate captain, and hastily arising, he said, huskily:

"Come, be out of this, or another one of us will go down. Whoever this hermit of the hills may be, he wars upon the gray and the blue alike."

"How do you know that, cap?"

"Because, when I attacked him—instead of running him through the back as I could and should have done—I saw a belt around his waist with the Southern symbol on it. My hot curse on the hermit of the hills!"

"So say we all of us," chimed the rest.

"And if I can ever meet him again, I shall blow a hole through his carcass, mind that, added the captain, who was not backward in the general movement to escape from the vicinity of the silent and terrible tragedy.

If the blow of death had indeed been dealt by the person known as the hermit of the hills, he was a very wonder in woodcraft; for there had been not the slightest sound to betray his presence near the four Confederates.

The unfortunate Dickerson was left lying where he fell beneath the assassin's knife.

"Forward!" ordered Sparl, striding to the front, while he kept one hand on a revolver, and strained his eyes first this way and



then that, as if in momentary expectation of another attack from the invincible and deadly foe.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE PHANTOM FACE.

In a broad clearing near and opposite to where Gladly Run empties into the Po river, stood, at the date of our story, a commodious dwelling, the residence of Jacob Evelyn.

Stood then, we say, for at the time of the great conflict which forms an adjunct to the events about to be described, it was swept away by the storm of the battling hosts.

Jacob was a man of considerable wealth at the breaking out of the war, and had retired to this secluded home, where he had hoped that the tramp and devastation of soldiery would not disturb him and his little family, and that he might be permitted to pass his declining years in peace.

There were only himself and Mrs. Evelyn, and Ida, their only child—the latter a young lady at the verge of her majority.

The three had lived contentedly together in this almost isolated spot, surrounded by the spicy grove and the blooming garden, with the sparkling water of the stream making innocent music on the airs as yet unpolluted by the din of guns.

A very beautiful maiden was Ida; often had old Jacob remarked to his wife that he almost feared it was wrong to place so rare a pearl in the wilderness of seclusion.

But Martha Evelyn saw therein an assured safety for the precious child she had reared with jealous care; and Ida herself was ever bright, ever glowing with health and the color of a mind at ease with her lot, if not expressedly happy in it.

But now the clouds were coming.

Not many miles distant, and for days, had boomed the guns that told of carnage in the direction of the Rapidan; not many hours away might be the moment when they would be in the midst of the contending armies—for old Jacob had kept himself posted as best he could regarding the aspect of affairs; and when he, with everyone, knew that Ulysses, the “hammerer,” was leading the great army of the Potomac against Lee at the Rapidan, he had shaken his aged head sagely and said:

“Now we may see a campaign, the like of which has not yet gone into history, for all that can combine to make war bloody and terrible. Let Robert E. Lee beware of the foe who comes to meet him this time. Would that we had gone away from this country entirely, Martha, for it may be that ere the month is past we will be homeless.”

“Homeless?” rejoined Martha Evelyn, questioningly. “Why, cannot we still go if they batter down the house? It is easy to seek some other haven, I think, when one has plenty of money.”



Old Jacob winced at this, but she did not observe it.

"Yes," he said, in a strained composure, "easy enough." While, in his own mind, he added: "If she only knew—if she only knew."

At every conversation upon the subject of war, Ida's cheeks would color more deeply than was their wont.

"I love heroes," she had her say, simply.

To which no particular attention was paid.

But deep in the young girl's heart there was an additional voice that added: "Yes, I love heroes—and one hero best of all!"

Jacob Evelyn had been able so far to avoid mixing in the element of opinions. To all who knew him from the first of the period of strife he had appeared to be purely of a neutral mind—this permissible even in those excited times, because of his extreme age, for Jacob was seventy years old then, and past the mixing with opposing factions.

This, and a careful guard upon his language, accounted for his being where we find him on the eve of the shock that was soon to occur at Spottsylvania Court House.

At the moment, we turn to the home of the Evelyns, father, mother and daughter were seated in the great square parlor, and a look of anxiety was in the faces of all.

"I fear one man on all the earth more than the combined armies of the North and South," Jacob was thinking. "I have thought that, after all these years, I may have thrown him from my trail; but sometimes there come dreams that he is still hard and merciless on my track to have revenge, to kill perhaps; and the God in Heaven alone knows my innocence of the crime which he laid at my door when Ida was but a babe."

In the mind of Martha Evelyn:

"Why need I worry? I know that my husband has plenty of money—not all in the South; so that if the South does not win, as I am sure it must, we can very early seek another home where there is no fighting."

By which train of thought it may be inferred that Mrs. Evelyn was of decided Southern proclivities.

Ida, too, was having some thoughts as they sat silently there.

"I know that the dear one I have not seen since I left the academy at the North, oh, so many years ago, it seems, is now somewhere near me. For to-day I found on the bench of the arbor the topaz ring I gave him at our parting. The country was breaking out with this terrible war then, and Heaven alone knew whether Norman McLean and I should ever meet again. When I gave him the ring he said: 'I will wear this constantly, Ida, and if ever the opportunity arrives when I may see you in your Southern home, and if it can only be done through dangers, you may know that I am near by finding this ring. I will find means for placing it where you cannot fail to get it.' To-day I found it in the arbor. I know that Norman McLean, the man I have loved faithfully for



years, is somewhere near, and that he will see me. What would father and mother say if they knew that I had promised, ay, that I had left my heart with Norman McLean when they summoned me home from the academy? Ah, I long to meet him again."

Even while these thoughts were passing within the secret recesses of her brain, and as if she momentarily expected to see her lover enter the room, her alert senses caught a sound on the outside.

A noise as if some one was climbing up to get a glance in at the closed window near which she was seated.

"It is Norman McLean," she murmured, mentally. "He is here. He wishes me to get a glimpse of him, oh, blessed glimpse! I think I see hands outside on the sill. He knows not whether it would be safe for him to boldly come in. Mother's Southern blood would, perhaps, rise to such resentment at his presence, for she so openly despises all Northerners that she might drive him instantly from the house. It is, perhaps, wise on his part to first catch my eyes and judge thereby whether he shall come inside. I must warn him by a glance that it would be best for him not to do so. And with this paper and pencil I can write large enough for him to read through the pane that I will meet him in the arbor within an hour.

She reached to a table that was near and took from it a pencil and slip of paper, with which she began slowly to write in large characters the message intended for the lover she believed to be then at the window.

While doing this her expectant eyes could not keep steadfast on the paper; they roamed covertly toward the panes where each second she anticipated the appearance of a dear face.

Then suddenly the paper and pencil dropped from her grasp, a look of horror settled on her beautiful features, and for a moment it seemed as if her whole frame was paralyzed by an overpowering sight.

Slowly, phantom-like, above the sill arose a visage of affrighting mold.

A head with hoary and sparse locks; beneath the hair of the head more hair of flowing whiteness, and in the depths of the hair of head and face two small, brilliant, piercing eyes that sparkled with a maniacal flame.

Close to the panes pressed the startling vision, until the breast of the gazer rose above the sill, partly exposed by the wide-rent shirt of tattered cloth, and over the face spread a grin so hideous that the transfixed girl at last found voice to cry:

"Father! father! Look—look there!"

The sound of her voice appeared to bring back the strength that had fled from her limbs, and at a bound she escaped from the chair near the window, running half the length of the room.

"What is it, Ida?"



"What ails you, my child?" anxiously asked both parents in a breath.

But again her voice failed. She could only raise one of the half bare arms of superb beauty and level an unsteady hand toward the window.

As she did so, and as the eyes of Jacob Evelyn followed the direction, another cry filled the room, this time from the lips of the old gentleman, who staggered from his chair, clapping one hand to his brow as if stricken a blow.

"It is he! He has come at last! I am doomed!"

The remarkable words astounded mother and child.

Instantly their mutual dread of the strangely horrible visage that glanced in upon them was forgotten in a nameless solicitude. For the words showed that Jacob Evelyn must know—know and fear, from some unaccountable cause—the owner of the spectral and terrifying face.

They hastened to his side, for he seemed about to fall.

The sight of the mysterious effect upon her father ennerved the girl, and as she twined her arms supportingly around him, she questioned:

"Who is it? What is it? Speak, father. Why are you so affected by that man—that man with a demon's countenance?"

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RIVAL CAPTAINS.

The face which had appeared at the window was that of the weird beacon builder, the hermit of the hills.

Upon Jacob Evelyn the effect of the vision was most astonishing.

Martha Evelyn's voice was full of mingled surprise and anxiety, as she asked:

"Whatever is the matter, dear Jacob? Do tell us."

But only a groan came from the lips of the strangely trembling man.

Freeing himself from his daughter's embrace, he sunk back again into the large easy chair and sat with closed eyes, his face pallid as the dead.

Ida glanced toward the window. The wraith-like image there had vanished.

And as she noted this, all heard a sound without that told of the passing or arriving of mounted soldiery.

"Some one is coming here," the old gentleman said, opening his eyes, and gazing up at his wife and child with a dull, desperate stare.

The two directed their attention to the high and broad door which opened into the hall near the front entrance.

A moment later the thud of horsehoofs ceased; there was a



jangle of scabbards on the little lawn before the house, and presently a heavy footstep on the wide porch.

The Evelyns were without servants then.

The attendants they had had were slaves bought and promptly freed after purchase; notwithstanding which, the prospect of liberty in wider and long wondrously hidden parts of the northern country, had finally lured them away from a home where they had invariably known an indulgent kindness.

Whoever the party was that now crossed the porch of the Evelyn mansion, it must have been known that a summons at the door could only be answered by some member of the family, for without even a knock, the massive door was thrown open and the comer advanced along the hall with saber clanking on the glossily waxed flooring.

Into the room stalked a man wearing a dashing suit of Confederate cavalry gray, surmounted by epaulettes, and on his head a hat of the same color, having a monstrously broad brim.

Beneath his hat were a pair of glaring bright eyes, and from his chin a goatee that touched low on the shining buttons of his coat.

Ida bowed coldly and half averted her head, while she thought:

"Ah! it is Captain Killbrag. Am I never to see the last of him—the one whose importunities for my hand in marriage have at last assumed the fashion of a nightmare to my soul? It is very wicked, I know, but I have caught myself wishing, time and again, that he might be slain by the bullets of the Yankees he hates so fiercely."

At seeing who the comer was, Jacob seemed somewhat relieved; for at first, when he heard the approaching step, he had moaned inwardly.

"He has come—the trailer who swore to have revenge! I am a doomed man the instant I stand face to face with Callis Grimshaw! Fend me, Heaven! for I am innocent—I am innocent!"

Mrs. Evelyn appeared not to be the least disconcerted by the arrival of the Confederate cavalry captain, who had paused on the threshold, staring inward with orbs that burned searchingly.

"Good evening, Captain Killbrag," she at once said. "Oh, we are glad to see you! We have been very apprehensive; the Yankees are getting so disagreeably close, you know——"

"Yes, I know, malediction on them!" interrupted the captain, in a grating voice. "Too close for their own good—for anybody's good. But I did not come here to talk about the Yankees being close; I came to say that if you want to save your lives you had best get out of this quickly. Prepare yourselves, and come with me."

A few words more, in which he impressed them with the idea that within the hour their house would be shot into splinters, caused Martha Evelyn to say:

"Come, Ida, come; let us hasten up stairs and get on some strong



clothing. I verily believe that we will be fugitives. How terrible for people who ought to have comfort alone with so much money as we have. Come, my child."

"Hasten, then. And while you are gone about it, I will speak with Mr. Evelyn. I have something important to say. Ho, very! Your ear, Mr. Evelyn."

Captain Killbrag helped himself to a chair, and sat down beside Jacob.

"I wish to say," he opened, in a harshly brisk way, "that your daughter, the beautiful Ida, had better reconsider her refusal of my offer of marriage. These are stirring and perilous times for a young girl to be without an able protector. You are getting old—you are already old, Jacob; you are too feeble a man to insure the safety of your daughter. I am a strong man—strong as a dozen or so tigers contrasted with you. Before we leave the house tell Miss Ida that we are to be married by the first army chaplain we may meet. She will have a protector then worth admiration. Yes; by the dragon of George! yes."

Evelyn seemed to be in a state of partial apathy.

The secret something, which weighed upon him at and from the moment of seeing the terrible countenance at the window, was upon him still.

Without meeting the captain's gaze, he answered:

"I have done all that I could to persuade Ida to the match. I cannot force the child. She is now at the age of womanhood; she is her own mistress——"

"Malediction!" burst interruptingly from the captain's lips.

But it was not caused by the hesitating reply of Jacob.

Ere more could pass between this glaring-eyed suitor for the beautiful girl's hand and the aged father, another comer was upon the scene.

The bearded face of Captain Sam Sparl appeared in the doorway, in a manner showing that he had entered by a rear ingress.

His bloodshot orbs were glowering upon them, and his evil brow was knit in a cloud.

"You are about to make a fine bargain here!" he exclaimed, at the instant of their beholding him. "Ho! a fine bargain, I swear. But I have something to say about that."

"Who are you, now?" demanded Killbrag, starting to his feet and frowning upon the intruder.

"Who am I? Sam Sparl. What am I? Look at my epaulettes. I am as big a frog in the ditch as yourself. You are after the angelic Ida Evelyn—so am I——"

At this speech, and before another word could be uttered by Sparl, the cavalry captain vented an oath and laid his hand on his saber hilt.



The movement was imitated by Sparl, who gnashed, at the same time:

“Drive ahead, there! I am ready for you. Look!”

He made a motion, and out from the shadows of the hall stepped his three followers with leveled guns.

“Flame and fury!” he added. “I am here just in time to prevent your running off with the angelic Ida. She is for me. I told Jacob Evelyn, two years ago, that I would yet wed with his daughter; I am here to fulfill that delightful promise. Out with you! Begone! or I shall order my men to fill your carcass full of bullet holes!”

Evidently, having entered the house by the rear, and at some moments after the arrival of Captain Killbrag, Sparl was not aware the former had a detachment of cavalry at the front and within call of his voice.

This was apparent to Killbrag, and while he smarted under the other's words, a devilish smile curled up his goatee on his chin until it stuck straight outward.

Throughout, Jacob had maintained silence.

He knew that both these fiery Confederate leaders were resolved to wed with his daughter; both were objects of detestation in his eyes.

But surrounded as he was by an element which even then inclined to believe him a Northern sympathizer, he discerned that either of Ida's savage and abhorred suitors might make immense trouble for him.

A crisis was now pending in the great, square parlor.

In his mind Jacob was saying.

“I wish that these two fire-eaters would spill each other's blood in mortal combat! If both should be killed, Ida would be mercifully relieved of a pair of rogues who think that I do not know their true characters. Let them fight if they will.”

“I—I am to be the husband of beautiful Ida Evelyn,” said Killbrag, intensely.

“Not you—but I!” retorted Sparl. “It is for that I am here to-night.”

“It is for that I am here to-night.”

“Guns and fire! we'll see who will get her——”

“We'll see——”

“Give it to him! Fire!”

And promptly, as Sparl ground out this order to his men, the three muskets banged with a deafening report in the room.

But Killbrag was not idle.

As the word to fire was leaving the bearded lips of this sudden rival in his path, he stooped with a lightning jerk, and the slugs tore through the air above his head harmlessly.

One of the slugs struck the tall lamp on the table.



## CHAPTER V.

## AGAIN THE UNSEEN STRIKES.

Darkness ensued.

Not total darkness, for as the lamp went out, shivered to atoms, a dull glare was visible through the windows, like the reflection from a distant fire.

This light was occasioned by the burning woods of the far off Wilderness.

And it was owing to this blazing stretch of woodland, which rendered it impossible for the Confederate commander, Anderson, to find a suitable bivouac, that the troops were moving toward Spottsylvania Court House by night, instead of waiting for further orders in the morning, as Lee had instructed.

Dull though the reflection, there was light enough in the spacious apartment to show the Mississippian, Sam Sparl, that his rival had escaped death by the discharged muskets.

"Flames of earth!" he roared, making a dash forward, with drawn sword.

"Malediction!" gritted back the cavalryman, sweeping his saber aloft in a gleaming streak.

Then there was a glitter and clash of steel in the air, as the two came together in combat.

Simultaneously there rung forth a shriek from women's lips, and following the shriek a shout from the outside that told the troopers of Killbrag had heard the reports of the muskets and were hastening toward the house to ascertain the meaning of the unexpected disturbance.

Ere ten could have been counted, the room was filled with the troopers in gray—filled, too, with a torrent of oaths that poured from Captain Killbrag.

He was just arising from the floor as his men came running in. The sword of Sparl had been superior to the heavy saber of his antagonist. At one scientific twist, he had disarmed Killbrag, at another, delivered unintentionally with the flat of the blade, he had laid his rival sprawling.

But Sparl heard and well knew the meaning of the shouts and tramping feet outside.

"Ho!" he growled. "This fellow has armed assistance close. Perhaps too many for me. But I think I have killed the dog who aspires to the hand of the woman I have sworn shall be mine. Let him lay and rot, and let me get out of this. Follow me!" to his men, as he made a dash for the rear door, by which they had entered.

"Malediction!" half howled Killbrag, as he regained his feet. "Make a light here, quickly. After that hound who calls himself a captain; who is, I now recall, a captain with Barksdale's bri-



gade. Capture him. Flay him! Shoot him on the spot, and make a light, I say!"

Another lamp was found, and when lighted it showed that in the easy chair now sat—a corpse.

One of the slugs that sped at the order of Sparl had pierced the brain of Jacob Evelyn.

The old man had died with the weight of a secret—a guilty secret, perhaps—on his soul.

Killbrag paid little heed to the dead owner of the house.

With quick commands he dispatched some of his men to scour the premises.

Grasping up the lamp, he rushed from the room and ascended the stairs.

"Ho! by the dragon of George!" he muttered, as his heavy boots thumped on the staircase. "Now, then, I think I shall have things all my own way. Old Jacob Evelyn is dead; his wife and child had better accept of the protection I can offer them. His wife—bah! It is the beautiful Ida that I want. Ida, and the wealth it is rumored that old Jacob has hidden somewhere in the North. I wonder if the beautiful Ida knows just where her father's money is? But where can she be?" as he looked hurriedly first in one room and then another on the upper floor.

The young girl was not there.

A continued search revealed that she must have fled from the building altogether.

Prone at the threshold of the rear entrance, when he descended in a fury, Killbrag found Mrs. Evelyn insensible.

"What's this?" he snarled, bending over her with the waving lamp. "Ho! the old lady in a swoon. Hello, madam? malediction! Are you dead, or alive, or what?"

The sound of the harsh voice above her seemed to revive the unconscious lady.

She opened her eyes, and as she looked up at him in a dazed, frightened way, she wailed:

"My child—Ida! Oh, where is my child?"

"By the barred flag! that is the very thing I want to know!" blurted Killbrag, his burning eyes fixed upon her like two wolfish orbs.

"Oh, did you not see her?"

"No——"

"She is gone, then."

"Malediction! She has run away from me, eh?"

"No, no; she was taken bodily. Did you not hear our shrieks? A man, a shape of horror, was in the room above. We tried to flee, but he sprung upon us like a very tiger, and taking Ida in his arms, bounded down the stairway. Find her—bring her back to me, I implore you, Captain Killbrag——"



The captain had wheeled before she finished. Back to the front of the building he strode, almost running.

He believed that the one who carried off Ida Evelyn—if any one had carried her off, as Mrs. Evelyn said—must be his rival, the Mississippian of Barksdale's brigade.

He knew that that brigade was moving to Spottsylvania Court House ahead of Anderson and McLaws.

Rejoining his troopers, he cried :

"Scatter! Search again if you have not found a man wearing a gray uniform, who may call himself Captain Sparl, of Barksdale's brigade. Down him the moment you see him! Kill him—those are my orders! He has a woman in his arms, though, so be careful that you do not shoot her. Search—search!"

Several were then beating about the undergrowth at the verge of the lawn; nearly the whole of the remaining detachment now started briskly to join the search.

But nothing could be found of Sparl or his subordinates, nor could anything be seen of a female in the trees surrounding the dwelling, though the hunt was prosecuted far into the timber.

Though nearly every foot of ground around the mansion was tramped over by the troopers, they failed to discover an item that might have given them a clue—this item the face of a man that was pressed to the few bars of a narrow, horizontal window at the base of the building, and which was a ventilator to the cellar.

The white-haired face of the hermit of the hills.

Deep in the shadow of the building, the window itself was hardly to be seen; the face that grinned behind the bars, however, could plainly mark the movements of Captain Killbrag and his striding cavalrymen.

The troopers now were all verging toward the back of the mansion. Only two guards remained with the horses.

Suddenly these two felt themselves seized, felt terrific blows falling on their sombreroed heads that sent them groaning and lifeless to the sward.

"Mount! Take horses and away!" cried the voice of Captain Sparl, though guardedly low. "Flame and fury! we will trick these troopers of the rival I thought I had killed. Mount! I have two persons in mind now whom I will one day meet and settle an account with—curse them! The lunatic hermit of the hills and this fellow with a saber who says the angelic Ida Evelyn is to be his bride. His bride! Ho! I would walk a thousand miles to smite off his head before he should have her! But hurry, there."

The next minute the troopers were arrested by a sound of horse-hoofs at a gallop receding from the vicinity of the mansion. Killbrag immediately divined its meaning.

"Malediction!" he burst forth, following with an oath of sulphurous deepness. "We are outwitted. The man we seek has played



the fox and stolen our horses by a double. This way! Forward—haste!”

Leading with tremendous leaps, Killbrag made for the spot where the horses had been left under guard.

He fully expected that every horse had either been stolen by his sly rival or stampeded.

As they passed near to the house, something hurtled silently but with a bright gleam through the air.

Those further in the rear of the excited captain half paused and turned their heads as a groan of agony came to their ears, and the glances thrown back were just in time to see one of their comrades reel and fall with a heavy pitch to the earth.

“What’s the matter with Darby?” queried one.

“Drunk again, I reckon.”

“He wasn’t drunk when we stopped here a few minutes ago.

Rapidly retracing their steps to the side of the fallen man they stooped over and then shook him, as he failed to respond when addressed.

An astounding discovery was made.

Protruding from the cavalryman’s neck was a huge knife that had pierced through sinews and arteries, clear to the hilt.

He was in the last throes of death. Vainly he tried to articulate, and at last, with a weak effort, pointed toward the low and narrow cellar window.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A SKIRMISH LINE OF BLUE.

There were eighteen troopers with Captain Killbrag—all that remained of his company after the ordeals met by Stuart’s cavalry in the havoc of the Wilderness preceding this night.

These, while the body of the cavalry were maintaining a stubborn resistance to the advancing Unionists on the Brock road, had been sent on a scout to the westward and back in the bend of the Po, some miles beyond Spottsylvania.

By this late hour in the night the Confederates had learned that the objective was Spottsylvania, and not Fredericksburg, and already Longstreet’s column was on the march to cover the threatened point.

While the events we have so far described were transpiring, let not the reader imagine that all was hushed in those vast and gloomy woods which, combining with the enemy ensconced there, formed deadly barriers to the pressing host of the North.

Afar could be heard almost continuously the crack of carbines, telling of the fierce conflict between the opposing cavalry of Stuart and Merritt.

And afar, by the road from Parker’s store, were coming the men of Longstreet, weary, savage, thirsting for the fight that was not yet to end.



Thus was the point where our interest at present centers thrown almost directly between the mighty armies.

Captain Killbrag soon ascertained that only four of the horses had been made away with, and his usual outburst of anger was at its height when he was checked by a cry from those who had paused by the body of the unfortunate Darby.

"Captain—captain, come here!" was the shout.

"Well, what is it you want? Cone on, here; mount and search again for that devil of a man who has helped himself to our horses. We've no time to be losing here; the Yanks will be on us presently——"

"But somebody has killed Darby."

"Killed Darby? Malediction! what are you saying?"

Back he strode in hot haste to the mansion.

When he saw the corpse of one of his best men stretched in death, and comprehended that he had been struck down by an invisible foe, again his rage broke forth, and he started up, glaring around as if he expected to detect the assassin among his own troopers.

But before the scorching oath that was upon his lips could snarl out, there was an occurrence that startled all.

Out upon the night rung such a cry as none there had ever heard equaled in all their lives.

A scream like some great and unknown bird whose note was hoarse, loud and curdling.

The sound came from the rear of the mansion.

In a general impulse all ran around to see the utterer of the unearthly noise.

Against the dully red background of the distant burning woods could be discerned a man of herculean frame seated on a horse of unusual size.

Over his saddle front, held tightly in his left arm, was a figure that all saw was a female.

A way like the wind went this mysterious rider, and they saw a mass of hair from the hatless head streaming behind him as he half turned to look back at them.

The hermit of the hills!

None there knew or had ever heard of him.

But Captain Killbrag at once jumped to a conclusion.

"Malediction!" he ejaculated. "There goes somebody whom I have not yet known with my beautiful Ida in his abominable arms. Mrs. Evelyn said it was a man with a demon's shape who carried off her daughter. I see. It was not that dog of Barksdale's brigade; it was this fellow, whoever he is. Mount! After them! Follow me!"

When coming back to see what had happened to the man named Darby, Killbrag had led his horse along by the bridle,

As he cried forth the order to pursue the unknown, who was



making off with the maiden he wished to secure for a wife, he sprung nimbly into his saddle and dug his spurs deep into the snorting animal's sides.

Away in hot chase he went, and within a few seconds the others were closely following him.

Still there was some delay, and this permitted the strange rider with his burden to reach a crest, beyond which was a wide and deep ravine.

When Killbrag and his troopers came to the verge of the ravine, there was neither sign nor sound of the person they pursued, and in a disordered mass they halted.

While they hesitated thus, and the captain filled the air with his sulphurous oaths, some one cried :

"Fire! Look at the fire!"

A slim column of flame shot upward from the roof of the mansion, and out from the windows were now noticed rolling thick puffs of smoke.

A female figure ran from the burning building, screaming as she went, and Killbrag recognized Mrs. Evelyn.

The voice of the old lady contained more than alarm at the loss she was about to sustain in the conflagration of her home ; there was an accent of dismay that told of an agony in her heart, for she had discovered the ghastly corpse of her husband in the easy chair.

It must have been that the sight had deprived her of her reason temporarily, for, without thought of the horrible fate to the insensible body of the father of her child, when she discovered at the same time that the building was burning over her head, she ran swiftly forth to escape the flames.

For several minutes her shrieks could be heard as she went further and further into the woodland toward the Po.

Higher spurted the flames of the burning mansion.

"By the dragon of George!" the captain exclaimed, "I am sorry to see that. There is a good store of wine in the cellar, I remember. I would liked to have seized the wine."

But whatever he would have liked to do, something here transpired to throw the troopers into considerable confusion.

Crack, crack! sounded close by.

Zip, zip! whistled several bullets disagreeably close to their ears.

The hour was then nearing daylight. Already the streaks of gray and crimson were creeping upward in the eastern horizon, and this, with the faint glimmer from the burning woods afar, enabled the troopers and their captain to locate whence came the unexpected and nearly fatal shots.

More shots—for again broke the ominous crack! crack! of muskets to one side of the descent to the ravine.

And shadowy, flitting forms could be outlined on the border of



the timber, stretching away in an unmistakable skirmish line that seemed to be advancing.

"The Yanks! The Yanks!" cried several in a breath.

"Out of this!" ordered Killbrag, himself setting the example and spurring his horse back in the direction of the mansion.

Crack! crack! followed the discharge of the muskets after them, and the well known hurrah of the boys in blue rent the dawning air at seeing the precipitate retreat.

The sound of the muskets appeared to arouse to life another element in those mixed clearings and woody recesses.

As if by magic, from an opposite side of the clearing over which Killbrag and his men were speeding desperately, suddenly flamed an answering shot directed toward the skirmishers on the north.

Ah! the redoubtable foe of the Wilderness was promptly there; the Confederate skirmishers were alert and already on the spot to meet again the advancing Unionists.

Seeing this support at hand, Killbrag succeeded in rallying and forming his men by the time they had arrived at the edge of the clearing.

Then back they charged, full at the woods which contained the enemy, as yet invisible.

"Rout them out! Cut every one of them down! Death to the 'cursed Yanks! Malediction!" he yelled, in stentorian tones.

And the yell was echoed by the Confederate line that spread and encouraged the charge.

Straight at the trees and the hidden muskets within them the daring riders went.

But ere they reached the length of the clearing there poured forth a very sheet of flame that sent death more surely this time, for several saddles were emptied.

"By the dragon of George! steady here!" bellowed the bold cavalry leader.

But his cry was unavailing.

Ere the confused mass of horsemen could reform—for the fallen in the rank created an instant tangle—again came the volley from the trees, and as more of the troopers went down, Killbrag wheeled into the general stampede that ensued.

But for the support of the skirmishers that happened thus to meet the skirmishers of the Union army, there would have been a bayonet charge from the boys in blue ere the retreat was under way, which might have put an end to the career of a character as yet important to the drama of our story.

Pell-mell into the lane that led from the Evelyn mansion raced the flying troopers, and it was not until a considerable distance had been traversed that Killbrag could bring them to a stand.



## CHAPTER VII.

## A HORRIBLE ABDUCTOR.

When Mrs. Evelyn and Ida ascended to the bedrooms to prepare for the hasty flight urged by Captain Killbrag, the former remarked :

“What a fine, soldierly looking man is Captain Killbrag, my child. Quite a fighter, too ; I have heard him say himself that he is fearless as several tigers, and would like nothing better at any time than to meet and combat all at once a score of these detestable Yankees who are pouring down from the North. Do you not admire his soldierly bearing, Ida, my dear ?”

The young girl's lip curled with the loathing she felt for the cavalry captain ; for she had a keener perception than her mother, and saw in him a man that any pure and refined woman could not but despise.

A bold man, no doubt ; but bold in otherways unsuited to the taste of a tender being like herself.

But she well knew that the principal cause of her mother's admiration for Killbrag was the fact of his being a muscular soldier, who wore the gray so dear to her heart.

While busy with striking a light at the lamp on the mantelpiece, she responded :

“I believe Captain Killbrag is a daring soldier, mother ; but as to what he may be otherwise, I shall not venture an opinion.”

Mrs. Evelyn came to her daughter's side, and laid one hand on her arm gently, while she whispered :

“Do you know, Ida, he has asked your father for permission to pay a lover's attentions to you ?”

Ida shuddered.

She well knew the fact—knew, too, that her father shared a portion of her own dislike for the captain, and had even heard with a loyal pleasure the manner in which the bold suitor had been kept at a comparative distance by evasive answers to his importunities.

“Well ?” she said, half queryingly, avoiding her mother's earnest gaze as she adjusted the mellowing lamp shade over the tall chimney.

“Captain Killbrag is of an old Virginia family, my daughter, with whom my people were neighbors before I married and went North with your father. It would be an alliance of which I would approve. If you have not already felt anything more than commonplace friendship for the dashing captain, I would like you to try and interest yourself in the attentions he will surely be paying you shortly——”

Again the girl shuddered inwardly ; and she interrupted

“Dear mother, is not this an inauspicious time to discuss such a



subject? We are in danger here. Every minute we lose but increases our peril. Captain Killbrag has urged us to make haste. Hark! What was that?"

Both distinctly heard loud voices below.

Voices in which could be distinguished the exclamations:

"Flames of earth!" in a roar.

"Malediction!" in a grit of anger.

And simultaneously a terrible crash of muskets that shook the floor and rattled the window panes till the glass seemed about to burst in fragments.

The shots and the cries were of a suddenness and dread significance that startled the two beyond words.

Transfixed for a moment, they gazed at one another in affright. Then in concert they turned toward the door.

As they did this, a shriek burst from the lips of Mrs. Evelyn—the shriek we have mentioned as having occurred almost at a blinding moment with the explosion of the muskets.

Well might that shriek have arisen from any woman, though Ida's tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and all power of voice fled from her.

For there in the doorway stood such a sight as could but cause their hearts to stand still in horror.

A tall, weird figure it was—a man with snow-white beard and sparsely flowing locks from a bare and half bald head; his eyes like twinkling beads of basilisk fire fixed steadfastly upon them.

Instinctively, after that single outcry from Mrs. Evelyn, mother and daughter clasped hands.

To be rudely torn asunder, as the affrighting image bounded forward and grasped up the young girl with the swiftness of a monster falcon.

Not a word was spoken; both seemed powerless to resist the action of the wild-mien creature.

But when the mother saw her child being borne in strong, raggedly-bare arms away, as though she was an infant, she found strength to totter forward in giddy pursuit, articulating, chokingly:

"My child! Spare my child! Whoever you are, have mercy on my poor child! Oh, God! do not rob me of her!"

Whatever weakness was in the nature of Mrs. Evelyn, she was evidently wrapped up in her love for Ida.

The sight of this repugnant and maniac-browed being thus boldly making away with the treasure of her heart aroused all the departed powers of her frame, and as she staggered in pursuit of the silent and horrible abductor, could she have laid hands upon him, a fierce resistance would have been hers.

Like a grim shadow he seemed to melt before her into the darkness of the passage without.



Still after him she went, now running. But as well chase an intangible thing of air as that mysterious hermit of the hills, who held the pure girl in his gripe; and at last, at the rear of the lower hall, she uttered one despairing wail and sunk in the swoon in which she was shortly found by the excited and ranting Kill-brag.

The maniac Hercules had a horse at the angle of the back building—a horse, like himself, of gigantic structure and powerful muscle.

Gaining the saddle, he was about to urge the animal away, when an idea seemed to enter his crazy head.

Ida had fainted at the moment of feeling the terrible gripe that lifted her from the floor into his arms.

Hugging close his burden, he ran, stealthy and swift, back to an areaway, thence down the joisted stairs, and through the impenetrable darkness of the basement to the cellar.

Laying the young girl at his feet, he peered out at the grated window; and there was a low, chuckling sound issuing from the depths of his snowy beard as he watched the troopers just then moving toward their horses in obedience to the command of Kill-brag.

"Blood, blood!" was his hoarsely savage whisper. "I will have blood, blood! that I swore should flow, long years ago, when the world planted its dagger in my heart and laughed at my misery. The blue and the gray—oho! what care I who wears them, so that they are human whom I may strike! For blood I have lived—ha, ha, ha! they did not kill me with their jibes; and at last, at last, I have found the arch wretch of them all. Soon I shall strike him—even deeper than he struck me years ago; but I must have more blood, first. My cup of vengeance upon the world is not yet full. And it must be brim, brim over. Ha!"

At the last aspirated breath, one hand dropped quickly to his belt of knives.

He snatched a gleaming blade and took it by the point, poisoning it behind and sideways over his shoulder.

Only for a second was the weapon held thus; then, with the speed and trueness of a bolting arrow, he hurled it from the narrow space of the grated window.

It was a side throw, under awkward opportunity; but practice had given a wonderful accuracy to the brawny arm, and the steel shaft hurtled forward on its mission of death with a faintly whirring sound.

True to the mark it went.

The next instant the trooper, Darby, sunk to the earth as we have seen.

"Blood, blood!" jabbered the maniac assassin. "Another soul has gone out of the world. Ha, ha!"

Again taking up the unconscious form of Ida Evelyn, he re-



traced his way from the cellar, and was soon in the saddle on his gigantic horse.

Then he sent forth that shrill, curdling cry which drew the attention of the troopers to the rear, and gave his beast the rein, digging the heels of his battered shoes into the animal's sides at every leap.

On sped the madman, casting backward glances to see if he was followed.

Another cry he sent back to the prompt pursuers—a cry of hatred and defiance.

Into the little ravine he plunged with seeming recklessness.

But well he knew every foot of ground in that vicinity, for at once he guided his horse, though slower, into a narrow bridle path that slanted downward into the ravine, and by the time Killbrag and his men had reached the verge of the descent, he had made a turn at such a distance that the sound of his horse's iron shoes gave forth no betrayal of his whereabouts.

Onward to the waters of the Po he kept steadily, anon looking down upon the upturned and white face of his insensible captive, and muttering:

“A pretty babe. Always a babe to me. Oh, I know you, fair one! Child of a man whom I hate so much that all the hates of the world could not make one tithe of! Why I do not kill you as you lay here in my arms so helpless, I cannot tell; I would like to, but something is holding me back. But you shall die, nevertheless, in time. All shall die who are part of him—the man who wronged me and drove me mad!” and as he muttered, he appeared to be working into a frenzy, in which his claws of hands gripped the person of his captive with a fierceness that would have wrung a cry of pain from her had she been conscious.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### IDA MAKES HER ESCAPE.

It chanced that the course of the madman was westward along the ravine, and he had struck the narrow bridle-path scarcely one minute before the arrival there of the first of the skirmishing line that was coming forward from one of the brigades thrown out by General Warren after driving back Stuart's troopers.

Paying no heed to the sound of discharging muskets in his rear, he pressed on until near the river Po.

Here was the strange home of this strange being.

A burrow-like contrivance sunk below the surface of the ground, and its top covered with earth.

It was in a dense spot, and not discernible to the casual eye—a mere pit, with timbers stretched across at the level, and over these the sod that was now growing luxuriantly.



Before the entrance was a rubbish heap that further concealed its existence.

At other times, this weird hermit was accustomed to turning his great-boned horse loose to feed at will; but even his crazed intellect seemed to understand that the animal might be lost in the pending strife; and, pausing first to make him fast, he descended through the narrow opening to his abode, bearing Ida, still unconscious, in his arms.

In a few moments he had a light burning—a light in keeping with the rest of his surroundings, for it was no more than a pot of grease with a cotton taper floating therein.

The dull flare of the improvised affair gave him an even more weird and terrifying appearance.

Waving the light over the face of the girl whom he had deposited upon a pile of tattered blankets, he contemplated her with an almost fiendish aspect.

“A pretty babe—a pretty babe!” he mumbled. “But you must die, as must all who are kin to the man I have sworn should grovel amid the torture of my revenge. Ha! what’s this?”

Suddenly stooping, he grasped and held nearer to the light one of his captive’s hands.

Glistening there was the topaz ring we have heard her commune upon as having been given by her at a former time to a dear lover, and which had recently come back to her possession in a manner that told her Norman McLean was somewhere near.

His eyes, starting widely, fastened upon the bauble in a look of mingled amazement and incredulity.

The sudden and rude gripe aroused Ida at last from the deathly swoon.

She regained consciousness with a convulsive shiver, and lay, gazing, as if in some horrible fascination, up at the wild creature who glowered above her.

“Where did you get that?” he demanded, sibilantly, and shaking the hand that wore the ring closer under the light.

For a second she seemed unable to reply.

“Speak!” he said, impatiently. “Where did you get that ring?”

“It has been mine ever since I can remember.

“A lie! It was stolen—stolen, I say. What are you doing with it?”

Ida could recollect having the ring as a plaything when a mere child, and afterward to wear constantly, excepting the period during which it was worn by her lover. That it had been a part of her mother’s jewelry, and that it had always been considered as a present from her, was all she knew of it.

Hence the intense interest which it seemed to arouse in the mind of her half hideous and dreaded captor was a matter of deepest wonder to her,



For the moment she was held by the eyes of the crazy hermit, and partly forgetful of the dangers of her position.

"I can tell you no more," she said, "than that the ring is a gift from my dear mother." Then, suddenly: "Where am I? What manner of place is this? Why have you brought me here?"

But the other paid no heed to these inquiries.

"It is the very one," he mumbled, with eyes still riveted on the pure stone in its rich mounting. "Years and years have passed since I saw it last. But I could never forget it. Ah! it greets me now like a reminder of those days when Callis Grimshaw was a man, not what he now is—an outcast; a thing that lives but for vengeance. It was my gift to her."

As mention of the name of Callis Grimshaw came thus from the wild being bending above her, Ida thought:

"That name! I have heard my father utter it in a mysterious way, time and again, and every time he has seemed filled with some secret dread. What can it mean? What can there be between this horrifying creature and my father?"

As she lay there on the pile of blankets, her face was toward the small entrance to the underground place.

And while the perplexing thought was passing in her brain, something occurred to distract her from the chilling fascination of her captor's gaze.

There was a movement at the screened opening—a movement, but no noise. Fixing her glance there, she saw presently a face peering in.

And instantaneously with the discovery, her veins felt a warm, glad thrill.

"It is Norman!" she exclaimed in her heart.

The maniac just then grasped her hand more tightly, and by a dexterous motion wrenched the topaz ring from her finger.

"Give it to me!" he cried, huskily. "It is not yours by right; it was stolen, I tell you. It was worn by the woman who blighted my life, and should not be on the finger of the child of the man whom I hate as my deadliest foe!"

He turned suddenly.

Wonderful ears, or a wonderful scent for danger must have had this hermit of the hills.

Stealthy as had been the movement of whoever it was that glanced, for a moment, in at the opening to this den-like hole, the giant appeared to be instinctively warned that there were others near besides himself and his captive.

Hastily depositing his fatty taper on a shelf scooped into the earthen wall, he glided on tip-toe away from her side.

Parting the bushes at the entrance, he looked out. But the hasty survey did not seem to satisfy him. The next instant he had disappeared.

Minutes passed.



Minutes not without their suggestions to Ida Evelyn that here might be an opportunity to escape.

Resolved upon an effort for freedom, she had half risen from the pile of blankets, when she saw a hand thrust inward at the opening, and this beckoned her to come forward.

"Yes, it is Norman," she said to herself, gladly.

Gaining her feet, she went nimbly across the earthy floor, and the hand yet there was outstretched to grasp hers.

"Norman, is it you?" she ventured.

"Ida—darling!" responded a well known and dear voice.

With a choking cry she felt herself drawn outward and into a pair of lovingly embracing arms.

"Ah, Norman, I knew you were near."

"You found the ring?"

"Yes. And Heaven must have guided you here to rescue me from that horrid being who left me but a moment ago——"

"And who may return at any instant. Come, let us leave this spot. No time for talking now, darling one."

The two walked swiftly from the hermit's den.

Day dawn was at hand, and they could see their way clearly.

Day dawn, and not so very far away were now rattling the musket volleys of Robinson's division, and sounding the cheers of Crawford's gallant boys in blue, charging the Confederate brigades in the clearing two miles north of Spottsylvania Court House.

By the bank of the Po, at some distance from the burrow of the mad hermit, the lovers came to a halt, and seated themselves on a great log.

"Are we going back to my home?" she asked, when her lips were released from his caresses.

"Alas, Ida, you have no home here now."

"No home?"

"The old mansion is even now burning, and what the fire does not perform will be completed by the havoc of the battle that will sweep ere long over it and this same spot where we are sitting."

"The dear old home burned, you say?"

"Yes."

"And where are my father and mother, Norman?"

He half averted his head. From a safe place of concealment he had witnessed much of what transpired at the mansion so recently. He had seen Mrs. Evelyn come forth alone; he had watched in vain for a sight of Jacob Evelyn, and his fears then were that either those musket shots within the mansion had been the death of the old gentleman or he had perished in the flames, for he knew that Mr. Evelyn was in the house at the time of the arrival of the troopers.

"You do not answer me, Norman? Have you seen my father



and mother since they fled from the burning house, for of course they must have fled?"

"I have not seen them, Ida," he replied, cautiously.

And he added:

"Let us not tarry here long; the danger is momentarily increasing, two-fold, since you seem to have a remarkable enemy in that wild-looking man whose captive you were. Who is he?"

"I have never seen him before in my life until this night," the young girl said; and she told of the mysterious presence of the crazy giant in the upper rooms of the mansion, and the subsequent singular circumstances of the ring.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### A DUEL WITH SABER AND KNIFE.

The air of that early Sabbath morn was filled with the dissonance of heavy guns and the roar of musketry.

The divisions of Crawford, Griffin and Wadsworth were in the hot and deadly surge of the battle, fighting, in some places, hand to hand with the grim Mississippi warriors of Barksdale's brigade.

Mingling with the guns was the Southern yell and the lusty cheers of the onward pressing boys in blue—onward pressing though in the face of a withering fire, and notwithstanding they had been well nigh routed at first encounter with this same stubborn foe who had come from the Wilderness to meet them again and heap the plain before their works with dead.

In this first conflict of charges, repulses and opening slaughter to the field of Spottsylvania, fought Captain Sam Sparl with all the bull-dog courage for which he was noted; in the charge from Crawford's division, which cleared the Confederates from their position in the woods, he received a scalp wound from a humming bullet that died his ugly face to an uglier aspect, and fiercer than were his looks were the shouts he uttered and the oaths he swore in keeping his men in solid rank as fast as the waves of slugs came to sweep down the grim victims.

As the hour advanced, louder and louder burst the din, fiercer and fiercer seemed to wage the warring tumult along the line of the Fifth corps.

Longstreet's column had not yet wholly arrived before Spottsylvania Court House; the woods were filled with the Confederate soldiery in the vicinity where Norman McLean and Ida had paused for rest and the brief conversation of the preceding chapter.

When he had heard her brief recital again he urged that they move on.

"But where to, Norman?" she asked. "If my home is in ashes, I know not where to go."

"Trust me for a refuge, Ida. I have not been in this neighbor-



hood since before the advance of the Army of the Potomac without providing myself with a refuge."

"And are not you with the army?"

"Yes, and no."

In the increasing light, Ida saw that his attire was of rather an unique character. In the first transport of meeting him, she had not observed that he was dressed as a very plain farmer, wearing a round, peakless cap that showed his high, broad brow and two very black and handsome eyes.

It had now been nearly five years since that parting time when she left the academy at the North, bidding him good-by with many misgivings that they might never meet again.

But as they walked along, keeping carefully back within the denser growth of the trees, she said to herself:

"It is the same handsome, true hearted Norman whom I left at the North. He has not changed noticeably. Why, though, is he not dressed in the blue? I thought surely that he was in the ranks of the Northern army."

"Yes, and no," he replied, to her inquiry. "I hold a lieutenant's commission in the second brigade, first division, under General Bartlett. I am also a bugler with the cavalry division, of General Merritt. But for the impossibility of using artillery effectually at the opening shock of the Wilderness, I would have been a gunner there, for I am no mean hand in the management of a field piece, I can assure you. So, you see, your true lover is a soldier after all."

He paused with a smile as she gazed perplexedly at him.

That one man should occupy so many posts of duty in an army was reasonably a matter to cause her considerable wonderment.

"Let me explain," he added. "Though I am all that I say, yet I am not confined to duty in the positions I mention. I am, in reality, an army detective."

"An army detective," she repeated, surprisedly, for that was something she had never heard of.

"Not to watch or hunt down anybody in the army, as far as I yet know; but I am a detective by profession—a fact I never acquainted you with before—and I am on a singular trail which, I and others believe, can be followed to advantage by my working in the track of the army now advancing into Virginia. While we are seeking the shelter I have in view for you, I can tell you all about it."

But it was not destined that she should then hear the explanation of her lover's business in the neighborhood.

Before he could say more, there was a rushing sound behind them; something alighted squarely on his back and at the same time he received a terrible blow which brought him with a groan to the earth.

Ida uttered a terrified shriek



For she saw Norman prone on the sward, and over him, with ragged knees planted on his breast, was the mad hermit of the hills.

"You thought to rob me of my vengeance!" piped the weird being. "Oh, you were both sly. But I have ears and I have eyes. I could follow you through the blackest night. More blood, now—more blood to fill my cup of revenge on the hated race of man. Another soul to leave the world! Ha, ha, ha!"

Norman appeared to be unconscious from the effect of the merciless blow delivered by this phantom-footed personage, who could glide and strike his victims ere a movement could be made to escape or resist.

The nomad Hercules drew a knife from the circle of many knives in his broad leather belt, and his visage was gay with a savage anticipation.

"Whoever you are," the girl screamed, "spare him! Do not do such a deed of murder!"

She ran forward and grasped the arm that was poising the knife aloft to deal the death blow.

"Back!" he snarled, furiously.

"Do not kill him!" she pleaded, frantically.

"Ay, him and all of mankind, but what I will have my glut of revenge. Back! Hands off! And—you, too, shall die! Callis Grimshaw spares none of the hated race of man, none of those who bear the hated name of Evelyn! Oh, I have found the arch wretch; I saw him last night, through the window. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ah, Heaven!" breathed the girl, half aloud. "He means my father. What can there be between this insane being and my father?"

And aloud, she cried again:

"Do not slay him, I implore you! He has never done you harm, I am sure."

But he wrenched his arm free from her frail clasp the force of the motion sending her reeling several feet backward.

Ere she could once more dart forward to avert the pending blow that was to strike out the life of helpless Norman McLean there was a whip-like crack from a point behind her, and the maniac, with a shrill screech, threw his brawny arms into the air, at the same time leaping to his feet.

"Malediction!" snapped a familiar voice, and the utterer, Captain Killbrag, strode forward.

At sight of him another screech broke from the hermit.

A sound so unearthly that it would have halted any man but the dare-devil captain in his tracks.

The wild creature had received a wound that was not fatal, nor even dangerous; but the smart of it rendered him more of a demon than usual, and he hurled himself upon Killbrag like some swooping bird of prey.



"Ho, you lunatic! I have caught up with you, have I? You kidnaped my charming, my beautiful Ida! Now, then, keep your distance, or I shall put another bullet where I sent that first one—Ha! you mean to fight?"

He whipped out his saber and flashed it before the face of the charging man in a whizzing circle.

But, to his amazement, the giant met the blade with one of his huge knives, and before he fully comprehended what a ferocious antagonist he had to deal with, he found himself being forced slowly backward by that gleaming, thrusting, jabbing weapon whose short length he had thought to treat with contempt.

A most singular duel.

At the first onslaught the captain thought to twist the knife from the grip of his adversary.

Then he opened his eyes at the exhibition of a wonderful prowess.

Finally he gnashed:

"By the dragon of George! you are a smart one with that toy. But I am a smarter one with this saber, as you will presently discover," and putting more of both strength and science into the twirl of his own weapon, he sought to regain the ground he had at the commencement yielded.

Not an inch gave the warring hermit of the hills.

Like the short blade he wielded, he seemed made of an unyielding texture.

Silent and fierce he fought on, and there came to his visage a grin that was most infernally hideous.

The captain bit at his under lip until his goatee stuck out straight, as we have seen it do before in the parlor of Jacob Evelyn. He fairly strained his wrist in his exertion to beat down the guard of this wild-browed foe or disarm him.

And the steel of the saber and the knife made sparks in the air as they clashed and twined and rung amid the gloomy chaparral.

The boom of the distant battle lent a marvelous interest to this duel at such unmatched advantage. And ever and anon the captain snarled, fast losing breath:

"Malediction!"

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE FLIGHT OF THE LOVERS.

It was not many minutes before Captain Killbrag discovered something that startled him.

His antagonist was really playing with him!

The knife in the hand of the tall Hercules was a better weapon than the cavalry saber, in the fact that, despite his skill, which was of no mean order, Killbrag perceived, after an exercise of the cuttest of fencing tricks known to him, that the short-bladed



though formidable knife was ever ready to meet and turn aside each thrust and lunge.

And broader grew the infernal grin on the white bearded face of the hermit warrior; his orbs, like the scintillating orbs of some calculating snake, seemed to say:

"A few moments more I shall play with you thus—then I shall strike. And when I strike, I shall strike deep to your vitals, to kill, to destroy forever!"

There could be no misinterpreting that unspeakable look in the eyes of the hoary-browed madman.

"By the dragon of George!" muttered the captain, over the end of his goatee, that now stuck out straighter than ever. "I believe this fellow can give me my quietus at any moment he may choose! Am I to be worn out and then killed? Is he waiting until my wrist is too tired to hold this weapon any longer, and then to jab that knife of his into my bowels? Ho! I will not die by the hand of this lunatic in rags!—I swear I will not!" and with an energy reborn from the dread that was creeping into his callous heart, he gripped his saber with a firmer hand, presently with both hands, and round and about he swept the trenchant blade in lightning strokes and cuts, intending at last to beat his adversary back or down by sheer force.

But here again he calculated without crediting the remarkable strength of his foe.

And we have seen to some extent what that strength was.

Suddenly, and just as Killbrag was on the point of dropping his guard in a desperate exhaustion, the maniac leaped backward beyond the scope of the saber, and wheeling short around darted away.

The action was so totally unexpected by the captain—and happening at the instant when he was making another of those furious sweeps at the head of his enemy, with the half calculation that much of the force of the stroke would be met by the ever ready knife—that he cut through only empty air, and by the force of the intended blow was carried spinning around on one heel.

"Malediction! I am a dead man!" he blurted, fully expecting to feel the cold steel between his ribs at his back.

But he completed the spinning circle without the sensation of having received any wound, and stopped himself at a plant, with saber feebly thrown forward to clash again on the other's weapon.

Brief as had been that turn-about on his heel, by the time he faced once more to the front, the tall form of rags had utterly vanished.

"Ho! he is gone!" was all the astonished captain could pant.

Had the strong-armed being been facing the captain then, the latter would have fallen an easy victim to the huge and ugly knife, for his strength was completely spent; he dropped his saber point



to a chip on the sword and rested, out of breath, on the massive hilt.

In the absorbing exertion of the duel, all thought of Ida, or of that other person whose life the Hercules was about to sacrifice had escaped him.

Now, reminded of the girl he was in pursuit of, he cast a quick glance around the glade.

Norman and Ida had also disappeared.

The detective lover had recovered from the blow which felled him, as the captain and the madman went hotly at their contest. Ida discovered this, and hastened to his side, a cry of gladness ready to burst from her lips; but he, instantly comprehending the situation of affairs, made a warning sign and quietly arose.

"Come," he said, briefly.

Hand in hand they hurried away, and had disappeared in the depths of the chaparral before their absence was known.

The hermit was first to note that his intended victims had fled. And the same powerful motive which had caused him to so directly assert that Ida, too, was to die by his hand as part of his mysterious vengeance upon her father, now drew him from the captain to a mad pursuit of the pair.

Thus really by a miracle was the captain permitted to survive after meeting with one who seemed to have sworn an oath of extermination upon the whole of mankind.

Providence was favoring the devoted couple in this instance, however, for the course taken by their wild-man enemy was at an angle diverging from the path.

"Malediction!" the captain ejaculated at last, sheathing his saber with a clang. "They have eluded me again—the girl and that unknown fellow who was with her. Curse my haste! why did I not permit the lunatic to jab his knife into the gizzard of the carrion who seems to be in high favor with the woman I mean to make my wife."

Picking up his revolver, and carrying it ready for use, he strode across and entered the timber—entered, by merest accident, at the very point where the lovers had gone in their flight. Had his gait been more swift, possibly he might have overtaken them, for they were proceeding rather slowly because of exercising caution in tread and taking pains to avoid the denser undergrowth, lest some swaying or crackling branch should betray them to the pursuer they fully expected.

"I think, dear Ida," he said, in an undertone, while supporting her onward by the arm, "we have succeeded in giving them the slip. But this occurrence will defer our arrival at the refuge I had in view for you, and it increases our danger, for the woods are swarming now with Confederates. We are almost directly in the midst of their lines. The skirmishers were driven in just at dawn, and Hill, with his troops, is all along the road. Hear the guns!"



"Ah!" she sighed, "there is many a brave man going down there."

"And we must go further to the south of them. Indeed, it is partly necessary to pass by our ruined home to reach the haven I speak of, for it is quite at the bank of the Po, and nearly opposite Gladly Run. Hark!

They could hear the rumble of artillery coming down the road from the direction of Tally's Mill.

A tremor of apprehension passed over the girl, as she said:

"Dear Norman, I fear I am a great coward; but since I am reunited with you—and after we have been separated for so long—I am in dread of anything that can possibly tear us asunder. Oh, let us make haste."

Pausing to imprint a kiss upon the loving lips of the speaker, again he stared onward, his keen eyes alert for danger at their front or side.

Gradually they were leaving the sound of the bloody conflict behind them as they drew near to the spot where once had stood Ida's home.

Keeping in the timber at the edge of the clearing where the mansion had its site, they saw nothing of the structure but four bare walls rearing in the grimness of recent smoke and flame, and still ascended lazily from the charred heap.

She covered her face with her hands to shut out a sight that could but wring her heart sadly.

Neither, as they stood for a moment there, saw a ghastly object that lay prone and still at the verge of the trees—the form of a man whose face was bathed in blood and who appeared to be dead.

"Come, Ida," he said, gently. "Let us not contemplate this scene, which must bring so much of sorrow to your heart."

"If I only knew," she half sobbed, "where my father and mother could be! What can have happened to them since I was so ruthlessly dragged from them. My soul feels heavy, Norman; there is an oppression of some awful calamity within me."

"Come, come! we are not safe ourselves here. Come, Ida!"

Slowly, reluctantly, with yearning gaze turned upon her destroyed home, she allowed herself to be led away from the spot, and not until the trees hid from view the last vestige of the ruins, did she turn her head to look upon the path they were following.

Hardly had they vanished among the trees when the broad-shouldered figure of Captain Killbrag emerged from the side where they had come upon the site of the mansion.

He had not seen the pair; but something seemed to be leading him unerringly upon the track of the lovers, and he was not then very far behind.

"Hc!" he exclaimed. "The old house is burned entirely down."



I am sorry about the wine which I know was in the cellar. Rare wine old Jacob always had. But I thought I saw a flutter of a dress in yonder copse. Something tells me that I am on the right trail to catch my charming Ida Evelyn. I— Ha! what's this, by the dragon of George!"

Almost at his feet lay that ghastly object which had escaped the notice of Ida and her lover.

As he half recoiled from it, and fixed his surprised gaze upon it, again his favorite interjection burst from him :

"Malediction!"

The lifeless and bloody form was that of Jack Evelyn.

A horrible corpse it appeared to be. But how had it escaped the conflagration of the mansion?

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## CHAPTER XI.

### A FORTUNATE HIDING PLACE.

Captain Killbrag had seen many ugly wounds in past battles of that same civil war in which he had figured as a cavalryman and won his epaulettes by daring, even ruthlessness, on the fields of gore.

As he stooped over the body of Jacob Evelyn he had time to observe what was of no interest to him at the time he was ranting through the mansion in search of Ida.

At first glance it would have seemed that the bullet which had stricken the old gentleman had penetrated the brain. But closer examination revealed that it was but a wound on the outer of the skull, though terribly furrowing the scalp and smearing hair and face with the oozy stain of red.

"Umph!" he grunted, "he did not die by that slug, I see. But he is dead nevertheless; yes, dead as a nail," giving the body a punch with the toe of his heavy cavalry boot, "and I have no leisure to waste over dead men. I must catch up with my beautiful Ida. I am sure that she and that carrion with her, whoever he may be, that has popped up as a companion for her, have gone this way. This tear from a dress that I know she wore convinces me that I am on the right course," and he shook a piece of dress goods in his griping hand, which his quick, roving glance had seen and the hand snatched from a bush as he came along. "Malediction! I will come up with them shortly, never fear; and when I do, I shall make shivers and splinters of the one who is now hurrying her away from me."

Once more, and swifter than before, he continued onward, crossing the little clearing and disappearing in the woods fairly on the track of the lovers.

But the captain was not to overtake the two yet. By a turn which Norman made from the plain west of the old court house, Killbrag was thrown astray.



And it was not long after this that the army detective led his sweetheart to a nook that did indeed present the promise of a safe retreat.

It was almost as completely hidden as was the underground abode of the hermit of the hills, was the cabin, with but a single room, that stood nigh to the east bank of the Po, a short distance south of Gladly Run.

It was here he made his secret rendezvous while working on the mysterious duty which he had mentioned to Ida, and further explanation of which had been interrupted in a manner so nearly resulting in the loss of his life.

"I do not think, Ida, that any one will discover us here. Rest, darling, while I show you how I have made out here likesome old bachelor. You must be hungry."

The one apartment of the cabin had no furniture, but Norman had provided it with several clean logs, squared one upon the other, affording rudely welcome seats.

In crevices, and on rough pins that protruded from the side of the nearly toppling structure, were several bundles, and bringing forward some of these, he smilingly spread before her a repast of corn cake and meat.

"There are some darkies left in this section yet," he said, "and the man who can prove himself to be of the Yankee army generally finds favor among them when in need of food or shelter from a hard pressing foe. It is not a very delicate meal, but it will at least satisfy the craving of hunger. Eat, if you can, for you may need your strength in case we have not eluded our pursuer, the madman."

"And the other, the Confederate captain," said Ida, with an apprehensive glance toward the doorway, where there was no door.

"Ah, yes; he seemed to be after you for some cause, too."

A frown settled on his brow when the young girl related the occurrences within the mansion on the night gone.

"So I have two doughty rivals to contend with?"

"Not rivals, Norman, they are rather my persecutors. If anything should happen to my dear father and mother, I fear I would have a hard time between Captain Killbrag, of Stuart's troopers, and Captain Sparl, of the Mississippi brigade—for the latter declared two years ago that he would yet make me his bride, and I recall how angry father was at his impudence, and forbade him ever entering the house again."

Norman McLean looked long and passionately into the face of the beautiful girl whose heart he knew was wholly his, and he said, with all a lover's ardor:

"I shall be on the lookout for them, darling. And depend, neither this Captain Sparl nor this Captain Killbrag, as you name them, will snatch you from me."



"And that other—that horrible other," she reminded, with a little shiver.

"The strange fellow in rags who seemed to seek my life, as you have told me while we came along?—for I believe I was unconscious and unaware of the knife being raised to strike into my heart as you have described."

"Yes, that one. Oh, Norman, what can there be between him and my father that he should hate my father so? He declared that I should die by his hand, that all who were near and dear to my father, and my father himself, were to perish for some wrong done him in the past."

"Some fancied wrong, doubtless. He is evidently crazed, and it is some freak that he has fastened his hate upon your good father, Ida."

"Still I have cause to fear Callis Grimshaw."

"Callis Grimshaw!" cried the young man, suddenly.

"That is his name, I judge, by words he dropped when he held me a captive in the strange place half underground."

He was gazing at her with widened eyes, as if he had heard something to cause him vast amazement.

"Callis Grimshaw!" he exclaimed again.

"I am quite sure it must be the name of the demented creature who seems to hate me and my father so intensely."

"Why, Ida, that is the name of a party of whom I am now in search—the name of the man who is deeply concerned in the piece of detective business which brings me to this section."

It was Ida's turn to evince surprise.

"Wait a moment."

Norman arose and went to the doorway, glancing outward on all sides through the screening trees.

It was not a difficult matter for him to reconnoiter his surroundings from the doorway, though it would have been but a mere chance had any one discovered the cabin, hidden as it was under a great mass of tangled vines, and amid the trees that had grown interlocking in a dense wildness all about and over the crumbling roof and walls.

Only accident, excepting that some one was expecting to find just such a secret abiding place there.

Feeling satisfied that no one was near, he returned to her side, and said:

"What you have uttered has, in all probability, put me on the track of the very object that brings me here. While you are eating of the scant repast, Ida, I will tell you the brief facts in the case."

"I am curious to hear, Norman; more so than ever now, since you hint that this mysterious person is mixed up with a portion of your detective business. Are you quite sure that we are safe from discovery here?"



"No one is in sight outside, and I think, if I am a judge of sound, that the battle progressing among the twisting branches of the Po, is not coming any nearer. The graycoats are fiery fighters, and I think Warren must be held in check. But the little story I mean to tell you——"

"Yes. Let me hear it, Norman."

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At this hour in the morning the battle was waging lively between the blue brigades of Robinson and the grim warriors of Hill; and over the Ridge, from the Carharpin road came the thunder of artillery, where Miles and Gregg's cavalry were holding back the bold hostiles threatening the Union advance. Ever and constantly the reverberating volleys of musketry seemed to float like waves on top of waves southward from the front of the Fifth corps, encouraged now by the swiftly coming support of Sedgwick.

The ominous sounds penetrated to the concealment of Ida and her lover, and could not but hold a part of their attentive hearing as Norman proceeded to relate the brief detail of his detective business there in the chaparral of Virginia.

"It is a story," the young man said, "of seeming horror, yet of so much mystery that it has at last been doubted whether it was as wicked as at first appeared. Either there was a dark and red crime committed in the lower counties of Maryland some twenty years ago, or the pall of the most remarkable mystery yet remains there, in which figured, as one of the principal actors, this man named Callis Grimshaw. You really mean to say, Ida, that, by what that crazy fellow said in your hearing, while he held you captive, you believe his name to be Callis Grimshaw?"

"Quite sure, Norman."

"Then, if he is indeed the man, I cannot wonder that he is roaming the earth with a brain dethroned of its reason," McLean said reflectively.

"The story, Norman. I am eager to hear it. Something dreadful must have happened to Callis Grimshaw to bring him to such a state as he is evidently now in."

"Yes, something dreadful," he admitted.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE SECRET OF CALLIS GRIMSHAW.

"Callis Grimshaw, about twenty-one years ago," Norman McLean proceeded to say, "was a tolerably wealthy planter, in the county of Dorchester, in Maryland. He had married a very beautiful woman whose maiden name was Anne Crowley. No children had, or seemed likely ever to, bless their union, and they lived alone in considerable luxury; lived in happiness, too, as every one could see. But one day a great change came over the young wife,



in that she appeared to be in a strange state of unrest, pallor, for which she could not, or would not, give any explanation. As days went by she became more mysterious, until, at last, the husband's solicitude took the form of an unaccountable but fixed jealousy; he began to watch his wife's movements, and soon conceived the terrible suspicion that her faith was breaking, or was about to break, and bring desolation into his home. For awhile he could discover nothing definite to warrant him in charging her with being recreant to her marriage vows; and then, one night, there came the blow that seemingly told him the beautiful and frail Anne had deserted him.

"He was not without suspicions as to who had been the cause of his misery; these directed to a gentleman who was a near neighbor, and who had come to reside in Dorchester at about the same time as he did. Now, do not start or look alarmed, dear Ida, at what I shall say; but, by a strange coincidence, the name of the one suspected of having wronged Callis Grimshaw was the same as that of your own good father."

"Ah!" the young girl half gasped, with dilating eyes.

"Do not be worried by this circumstance. There are many people in the world by the name of Evelyn, dear Ida."

"Yes. Go on," she requested, in a slight tremble.

For she had instantly thought:

"Can it be? No, no, no, my father was never so great a wretch as that! My father would never have done such a deed. Yet the madman's hints—oh, horror! I cannot think that to be the reason he has sworn, as he intimated, that I and all by the name of Evelyn shall die in the strokes of his vengeance. No; my father has never done this thing. Norman must be right—it is but a strange circumstance of similar names."

"There, Ida, I did not mean to startle you, and I am sure there is no cause for that troubled look in your face."

"Go on, Norman. What else?"

"Much else. What was the first name of this party, Evelyn, has never transpired, for he was only in the neighborhood a short time previous to the disappearance of Anne Grimshaw, and he also disappeared from there at the same period. As it then was, the affair was only of a private nature, and what assistance the county authorities rendered the bereaved man were only such as they felt warranted in striving to ascertain where the recreant wife had gone.

"This was unsuccessful. Nor did Grimshaw seem to wish the interference of outsiders. But an after occurrence placed matters in such an aspect, that the authorities were obliged to take hold. At a day just one week subsequent to the supposed elopement of Anne Grimshaw, her dead body was found on the river shore, with marks of violence upon her. They were marks that indicated a murder.



"Grimshaw had left the neighborhood, presumably in pursuit of the man who had wronged, and the woman who had deserted him. Some of the wealthier people there subscribed to a fund for the employment of detectives to trace out the murderer. But the murdered wife lay in her grave year after year, without any development as to who the assassin could be. Grimshaw had returned once to look upon the plain marked mound covering the silent bosom once so dear to him; then he went away again, no one knew where.

"In the years that have passed, many different detectives have taken up the thread of the tragedy in hope of winning the reward that was afterward offered for the discovery of the assassin, and which stands to-day. I came upon the trail just before I made your acquaintance. I visited the scene of the tragedy, where, one would suppose, every trace, if any had possibly been left, had long ago been obliterated. But I was working under a luckier star, I guess, for I came upon a clew.

"Under the seat of an old arbor, where it had lain through the seasons and tempests of years, I found a lady's portmonnaie of polished silver and tortoise shell. It was of very solid and tight closing material and make, which accounted for what I found therein."

"Ah, you found something in the portmonnaie," Ida broke in, as she leaned forward to catch every word of the recital.

"Yes, a letter and a picture. Both were very dim, but fairly preserved in the tight receptacle—distinct enough for me to read the letter, which had no signature or address, and was couched in most affectionate terms."

"And the picture, Norman?"

"The picture of a man, probably past forty and not yet fifty years of age rather handsome and intellectual. He wore luxurious side whiskers, and above the whiskers was a mark, a line extending down the outer border of the whiskers, either like a faint scar, or because of some defect in the photograph."

"His hair?" came in a quick, half breathless inquiry from the girl.

"Photographs do not give any accurate idea of the color of a person's hair, but it struck me that it might be a mixture of gray and black."

"Merciful Heaven! Norman——"

"What is it, Ida?"

"You are describing a picture of my father, which I have seen, which my mother says was taken at a time over twenty years ago, when he came to Virginia to wed with her."

"The fact of his visiting Virginia for that purpose was well known to the detectives who had the case before I took it up. I have with me the letter of which I speak; the photograph I left behind, as the face was imprinted in my mind indelibly. I would



know the original of the latter at any time I might meet it. Here is the letter, if you can make it out."

From a wallet he produced a worn and faded document and reached it across to her.

No sooner had her glance fallen upon it than she uttered a short, whispery gasp and crunched the sheet in her hand convulsively.

"Ida, what is it, darling?" the lover anxiously inquired.

"Ah," she moaned, "this letter which I hold in my hand is a terrible revelation to me."

"How? In what way?"

"It was found in the portmonnaie?"

"Yes."

"And the portmonnaie was the property of— Did you say it belonged to Anne Grimshaw? I have forgotten."

"Undoubtedly hers, for there was a tiny golden shield on one of the halves of the pretty thing, bearing her name. But why these particular questions, Ida, and why are you so disturbed?"

"Norman," she said, faintly, "if the portmonnaie was hers, and if this note was in it, with its endearing terms, then I believe my own father was the one who ruined the home of Callis Grimshaw, for the writing is his!"

"Impossible!"

"Do I not know it well?"

"But it is some further singular coincidence in the case. It must be. For let me tell you, the detectives who had the matter in hand before me, and myself since, have followed the entire doings of your father from the hour he left that locality in Dorchester. We know that he left there alone; he straightway went to Virginia and married your mother, afterward taking her North with him. And it was not until after your birth that he was made aware——"

"Aware of what, Norman?" as he hesitated.

"Well, we detectives have a way of finding out things, you know, and we learned that Jacob Evelyn fled from the North to escape the man who, said the same rumor that reached him, telling him that he was suspected of the wrong to Grimshaw, had sworn to wreak a furious revenge upon him."

"And you knew, all along, that my father was suspected of this dark crime?"

"Only suspected by the wronged husband, Ida; no one else for an instant believed that Jacob Evelyn was in any way connected with Grimshaw's trouble."

"Yet this handwriting of the letter you found tells a fearful tale to me."

"It need not. I am as sure of your father's innocence as I am of yours—and you were not then born. Give it no more serious thought."



And when he had to some extent quieted the mental perturbation produced by the letter whose faded caligraphy so much resembled the well-known hand of her father—a letter to a married woman addressed in terms that glowed with affection—he said, in conclusion :

“I am now looking for this very Callis Grimshaw. It is believed that possibly he has struck the trail of the true murderer of his wife and has either had, or intends to have, vengeance in his own way. If he has not already slain the man he has, I must admit, good cause to slay, I have hopes of extracting the secret of the party’s identity from him, and with the reward which I have informed you still awaits the discovery in Dorchester, I will have wealth enough to offer my darling a pretty and bounteous home. At the same time I will be serving the cause of justice.”

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### A SHOT FROM KILLBRAG.

Though there was much that Norman told his betrothed in addition to what has been written for the reader’s perusal, its condensed form will suffice to give the idea of the strange trail started upon by the young detective—to come up with the deeply wronged man, and, in the belief that the latter had found or knew the scoundrel and probable murderer who had sown ruin in his home, get upon the track of that murderer himself that he might both serve the end of justice and at the same time win the large reward which had been entered on the county books of Dorchester, in Maryland, and had not as yet been withdrawn.

It was near the hour of noon when Norman concluded his recital, and again he arose to take a survey from the doorless doorway of their refuge.

It was well that he did this, for at the moment he looked forth, he saw several soldiers in gray in the act of crossing the stream to the side on which was hidden the cabin.

Sharpshooters he knew them to be, by their free-ranger-like accouterments, and the peculiar guns they carried.

“What do you see?” asked Ida, who detected that her lover’s attention had been arrested by something unusual.

“Only a lot of Confederates,” he answered, lightly.

“Coming here?”

“Coming over the river, but not to this spot, I’ll venture, for the old cabin is admirably concealed by nature; and the sharpshooters—for that they are—seem to be in a hurry. They will stand near her I think, so do not talk in a loud voice, Ida, lest they hear us. For myself I do not care; but I share much the same feeling which you said was yours. I do not wish anything to transpire to separate us. And when we can find your father and mother we will



all go northward, where there is an assured safety. I know that your father leans more toward the North than the South."

"But my mother, Norman."

"Well, we must try and overcome her scruples against the cause of the Federal government. If we fail in that——"

"Then?"

"Then I shall ask you to be my bride at all cost. You are of age now, Ida."

"Nearly so."

"And you love me well enough to let nothing stand between us and the sacred happiness we both hope for?"

"Yes, Norman," she answered, trustingly.

"'Sh! Be very still, Ida. The boat load of Confederates is now close to the shore. Do not speak loud."

She arose with the intention of going to his side to have a glimpse also at the soldiers that she felt to be her enemies, because they were the enemies of the man she loved above all men on earth.

The backs of both were toward the rear wall of the cabin, and neither saw there, spying through a crevice in the logs, where the mud plastering had long ago fallen out, a pair of balefully-brilliant eyes that were fixed upon them.

As the young girl arose, something shiny protruded inward through the crevice and was pointed at the form of the lover in the doorway.

A pistol barrel!

"Yes, come here, Ida, and take a look, if you wish; but be very cautious of your voice. You see, they are but a few yards off, and an unguarded sound will at once betray us—Ah, Heaven! I am shot!"

For at the instant she reached his side, there rung dully into the apartment the report of a revolver.

Norman McLean, without further sound than that one agonized cry of pain, sunk backward to the earthen floor.

Ida recoiled, speechless and rigid as one paralyzed, gazing horror-struck upon his prone form.

And ere she could fully realize that he had been stricken foully by a shot from ambush, a tall figure came striding in at the opening, exclaiming, as he appeared:

"Malediction! I have you again—and I think I have done for that fellow who was taking you away from me!"

Captain Killbrag!

The trooper captain, being at the back of the cabin, had not observed the approach of the sharpshooters at the front.

Nor did he see them now, as he laid a violent hold upon the affrighted girl's wrist and proceeded to drag her forth.

"Norman! Norman!" screamed Ida, as she found herself being forced away from the apparently dead presence of her lover.

"Bah! cease your noise!" he gritted, angrily. "Come, you are



to go with me. By the dragon of George! you are to be my bride, too, for I have sworn it. I tried to win you by fair proposal and now I shall try another plan. You are mine, Ida Evelyn, and the sooner you make up your mind to that, the better it will be for you."

Stoutly but in vain she resisted his onward pulling grasp. But when he threatened to take her in his arms if she did not desist, she finally allowed herself to be hurried away with sinking heart, and mind almost crazed by having witnessed what she believed was the ruthless murder of Norman.

The Confederate sharpshooters, attracted by the shot and the cry, were hastening toward the spot wherein was concealed the cabin, and they saw a man in a Confederate cavalryman's uniform to all intents maltreating a young and beautiful girl.

"Forward, here!" ordered the leader of the rifles. "Although that party wears the gray, he is too roughly handling a female to suit my idea of right. We will investigate this little occurrence."

Killbrag had not the slightest idea where he was taking the persecuted girl; his only object seemed to be to get her away from where she was.

As he tramped swiftly on, compelling her almost at a run by his rude gripe and his ruder speeches, he suddenly came to a stop—so suddenly that for a second he tilted forward on tip-toe—and snapped out:

"Malediction!"

He had nearly stumbled over a man's body that lay directly across his path, face up—a bloody, ghastly face that he and his shrinking captive recognized despite its disfigurement.

The lifeless body of Jacob Evelyn.

A shriek broke from Ida, and she swooned heavily on the captain's arm.

"Ho!" he blurted. "What does this mean? How the dogs did that body get away off here? Dead men do not crawl about like that. But I have no time to fool over dead men; I must get my prize somewhere where she will not escape me again. Where will that be, I wonder? And she has fainted! It is outlandish that women will faint when they are not wanted to. Now, then, I must carry her, I suppose. Bah! a fainting woman!"

Lifting her limp form in his strong arms, he stepped over the body of Jacob Evelyn, and continued his indefinite flight.

The shriek of the girl had put a greater speed into the feet of the pursuing sharpshooters, who were as anxious as their leader to ascertain what meant the singular scene they had but indistinctly witnessed.

Bearing his burden with many a grunt of dissatisfaction at the necessity of the effort, Killbrag was making his way on through a sparse fringe of woodland at some distance from where he had come so unexpectedly upon the body of the man who was the fa-



ther of the girl he persecuted, when again something brought him to a halt.

This time it was an object of danger in his path, and of a kind that caused him to instantly lower Ida to the soddy earth and lay his hand on his saber hilt.

In front of him, just emerging from a clump of trees, was the figure of Captain Sam Sparl.

Sparl was bare headed. Around his head was wrapped a broad bandage, clotted with blood, which came far enough down upon his bearded visage to cover one eye.

It was an ugly and painful wound he carried as a reminder of the moment when he and his men had been foremost in meeting the charge of Griffin's boys in blue. And shortly after this he had made his way to the rear.

But the burly Mississippian was not alone.

Griped in his broad and coarse hands and twined tightly about his thick wrists were two leashes of hide.

At the forward ends of the hides, now taut as the trooper captain appeared, were two monstrous bloodhounds that vented an angry and simultaneous yelp, and struggled as if they would have broken their bonds and hurled themselves upon Killbrag, to bite, tear and devour.

With the huge brutes held by a great effort in check, and as he paused in some astonishment at thus meeting with his rival for the possession of Ida Evelyn, and enraged to see that young lady apparently in the power of the trooper, his one visible eye burned muddily with the tremoring hues of a soap-bubble, and his beard dropped on his lowering jaw as he threw up his shaggy head.

"Ho! Fury and flames!" roared the mouth of Sparl.

"Malediction!" gritted hissingly from the bearded lips of Jonathan Killbrag.

The latter whipped out his saber at once, for he saw that it would be impossible to avoid a struggle with the man he hated from the moment of the announcement that he too was striving to secure Ida Evelyn for a bride.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### SPARL AND HIS BLOODHOUNDS.

As Killbrag advanced, Captain Sparl seemed to hesitate as to what he should do.

"Guns and death!" he muttered, savagely, in his immense beard. "Here is the parrot who seems to defy me for the possession of the charming Ida Evelyn! There is Ida with him. How did he get hold of her? But no matter. Now, shall I let loose these dogs and have them rend him into mincemeat, or shall I give him fair battle and this time run through his vitals to a certainty? Come, I think I am a match for him—more than a match," and with this he dexterously dragged back the dogs to a



sapling, and, by a quick twist, had the leashes turned and knotted, holding them firmly.

"Now, curse you!" he snarled. "Come on with that saber of yours. Once before I disarmed and ought to have killed you; this time I will make sure. Come on!"

"Ho," thought Killbrag, "I imagined at first that he meant to set those brutes upon me. But he means fight. Good! I shall show him a trick or two, which I had not the opportunity for trying at the mansion last night."

"Come on, I say!" bantered Sparl, drawing and giving his sword a flourish that showed he possessed a marvelous wrist.

"Malediction! I am coming, you worm!"

"Worm yourself! half a dozen worms!" retorted the bearded and thick lips. "I shall first run you through and then plant my brogan on your neck. Ho, come on!"

"And I shall spit you like the pig you are! By the dragon of George—yes!"

And thus bantering, defying, goading one another to anger, the two rival captains came together with a flourish of sword and saber, the weapons striking blade to blade with spiteful clash that flashed sparks in the eyes of both.

It was as they thus opened a deadly conflict that the squad of sharpshooters emerged upon the spot.

A singular scene they looked upon.

Two officers in the gray and epauletted uniform of the Southern army engaged at a mortal encounter, while the tied hounds at the sapling were leaping in mad efforts to break their leashes, uttering loud yelps, fierce snaps and growlings and anon a mingled and prolonged baying that filled the timber with a mournful sound of curdling tenor, augmented by the smiting, ringing steel of saber and sword that twined, circled, clanged and gleamed in the grips of the two fierce, fighting men.

For an instant they paused to contemplate the duel, then the leader hastened forward to where the unconscious girl lay.

His men clustered around.

They, like their leader, seemed to be more attracted by the face of the beautiful girl than by the strange duelists.

Killbrag saw them, as he moved about his antagonist, plying his saber with all the force and skill at his command.

"Malediction!" he uttered, in a deep breath. "Am I to lose my charming prize again? What brought these fellows meddling here ere I have spitted this burly viper before me?"

And Sparl, as his one useful eye fell upon the comers, exclaimed:

"Death and fire! who are these? I wish they had remained away from here until I have flayed wide the bowels of this big harlequin who is after my charming Ida!"

Both were too busy with the struggle, that was to be a mortal one



if either could make it so, to pay much heed to the little crowd of sharpshooters.

The fight continued until interrupted in a rather remarkable manner.

Suddenly all were startled by a voice that broke forth in an unearthly cry, piercing their ears and drawing their glance to one side of the timber.

The same unqualifiable yell which Captain Killbrag and his troopers had heard at the mansion on the night previous.

The saber and sword unreaved, even the hounds ceased their tumult, and seemed to partake of the surprise that fell over them all.

Following the curdling screech, and without a second's intermission, there bounded forward from the trees a giant figure with streaming beard and locks of hoary white.

It was the mad hermit of the hills.

In one hand, and raised aloft, he wielded a long, stout staff; in the other hand he gripped one of the huge knives with which his broad belt ever bristled.

With glaring orbs, swing, knife and staff in mowing circles around him, he dashed like a hurricane into the midst of the sharpshooters, overturning and slightly wounding several ere they could collect their senses.

Then, before the two captains could lanch themselves forward to prevent it, the weird and terrible creature had grasped up the form of Ida Evelyn.

The whole occurrence did not consume more than ten seconds, and he was off again as swiftly as he came, bearing the young girl in his herculean arms from their sight.

"Save my soul!" ejaculated the leader of the squad, "what kind of thing is that? After him, men! Rescue that young lady at all hazard."

"Shoot the madman!" roared Sparl, as the men started with alacrity on the trail of the half hideous being.

"Ho! yes; riddle him into pieces!" supplemented the trooper captain, who, nevertheless, kept a wary glance upon the Mississippian, lest the latter should give him a treacherous poke with his sword-point.

"What does this all mean, let me ask?" the leader of the riflemen said, coming to the side of the antagonistic pair. "Who is that young lady? What is the row about?"

His tone of address showed him to be one of considerable independence, and not to be awed by the fact that the men he spoke to wore epaulettes of captaincy.

"She is my intended bride, by the horn of Satan!" Sparl answered, boisterously.

"The mushroom lies!" Killbrag snapped.

"Mushroom yourself. Flay me! but I'll have your life yet."



"I am Captain Jonathan Killbrag, of Stuart's troopers."

"I am Sam Sparl, captain of Barksdale's brigade!" bellowed that individual, lustily, and glowering ferociously with his one visible eye.

"Come, gentlemen, it is a pity for two such brave men as yourselves to be fighting one another, when the cause needs your right arms in a different style of fighting. I have heard of the bravery of Captain Killbrag, and I know of the soldierly daring of Captain Sparl. Now——"

"Malediction!" broke interruptingly from Killbrag. "While we loiter here, that madman is making successfully away with my adorable Ida!" and with the words, and sheathing his saber, he started abruptly off on a run in the direction the mad Hercules had gone.

At the edge of the denser growth of trees he paused, however, and shaking his clenched fist back at the Mississippian, he ground out in a flame of hate:

"We'll meet again, you brute of a booby! I'll have your life—but first I go to find my prize, the angelic Ida."

"Brute and double booby yourself!" halloed Sparl after him; then, turning to the leader of the rifles: "Let him go. Ho! I know a quick way to find the girl who shall be—I have sworn—the bride of Captain Sam Sparl."

He clanged his sword back into its scabbard and strode to the sapling where the bloodhounds were tied.

"What are you about to do?"

"Flames and brimstone! I shall put these beauties on the trail of the demon of a man who carried off Ida Evelyn."

"But pause, sir, to consider. The savage animals may fall upon and kill the young lady you say is to be your bride——"

"Consider nothing!" was the snappish rejoinder. "I will overhaul that personage who is known by the title of the hermit of the hills, and—by the toe of Satan—I have an account to settle with him that these beautiful pups can cancel for me. Now then!" and as the furious captain said "now then," he led the hounds forward to the spot where the crazy avenger had stooped to grasp up the young girl.

The glossy and fangy-jowled beasts were well trained, for within a few seconds they had caught the desire of their master, and their deep bay of discovery told that they were on the trail of the hermit of the hills and his captive, as they bounded away into the timber, vieing with one another for the lead. After them followed Sam Sparl, venting his satisfaction with a sulphurous oath.

While this pursuit was progressing, with the sharpshooters beating about, baffled in their endeavor to see or strike the trail of the mad abductor, fresh waves of musket volleys were borne over the ridge to the spot, indicating that there was some new impetus



to the carnage at the front of battle on this afternoon of the eighth of May.

McNeill's brigade of New Jersey, of the Sixth corps, was bravely assaulting the Confederate position. Shortly blending in the sound, too, was the din of the rout that followed the charge of Crawford's division upon Ewell's corps, that came marching to the field by the flank.

Even above the rattle of the guns could be heard the cheers of the Federal troops, as they fell upon the surprised enemy and drove them back for a full mile with slaughter, and capturing many prisoners.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### AMONG THE TEAMSTER JOHNNIES.

The delays which occurred when the Army of the Potomac cut loose from the Wilderness and took up the march toward Spottsylvania Court House, were fatal to the plans of General Grant.

The Confederate columns were really only in process of arrival to intercept the Union forces during the eighth of May, and the position of the Fifth corps was one of extreme danger because of the tardiness of the support which General Warren fully expected would have come to him sooner; an attack in full array at this time would have given the Federals the coveted point, and perhaps much of the disaster that was in store.

With the exception of the shocks sustained by the van of the army mentioned in the preceding chapters, the gory field of Spottsylvania had not yet opened its horrors under the skies; and as night drew on apace there was a lull.

Night found Lee again planted firmly across the front of the Union host.

The ninth of May came in with less of bloodshed than might have been anticipated, considering that now the Army of the Potomac was in position, confronting the hasty though formidable bulwarks of the Confederates.

The same sharpshooters we have seen mixed to some extent with the stirring episode of our more particular characters in the chaparral, were busy during the day with their deadly rifles, and in the intrenchments of the boys in blue many a brave lad went down under the spiteful bullets sent among them from the ambushes afar.

Among the victims was the intrepid General Sedgwick.

It was during this day that a wagon train was observed from Hancock's position on the right approaching Spottsylvania, and incidents that transpired in the vicinity of the train are of interest to us.

Hancock was crossing the Po, under orders to capture the train if possible, and while the boys in blue were engaged in driving



back the small force of hostiles that there opposed them, we look upon the road along which the wagons were slowly winding their way.

The teamsters became apprised of the movement to intercept them, and their whips were cracking, their voices yelling, as they urged the fagged out horses on.

Presently the foremost wagon came upon the body of a man lying in the road with all the semblance of a corpse.

It was no time then to stop or drive around the mere body of a dead man, and in another minute the ponderous wheels would have crushed over the prostrate figure, when the latter suddenly gained his feet and tottered toward the coming wagons, with arms outstretched and waving in the air in a delirious manner.

"Water, water! For the love of God give me drink."

And the one who thus called piteously for something to quench his thirst was Jacob Evelyn!

Showing that the old gentleman was not killed, though terribly wounded by the slug that struck him down in the parlor of his home.

"Get back there in the rear, old man!" shouted the foremost teamster.

"Out of the way there, old bloody head!" vouchsafed another, coarsely, and intent only with whipping up his spans of mixed mules and horses.

But a third, more humane, and impressed with the woful aspect of the aged gentleman, called out:

"Skip into my wagin here. You'll fin' room thar, an' all the water you want in a pile o' canteens to the front board. Help 'im in, some o' you fellers," he howled to several of the guards of the train.

But for the help that was extended him old Jacob could not have gained the inside of the wagon; indeed, in another second he would have fallen in a faint from weakness directly under the hoofs of the snorting and galloping horses.

Eagerly he crawled to the forward part of the rumbling wagon, where he found the canteens indicated by the humane but rough-mouthed teamster.

In some of these was a more powerful draught than water, and though Jacob was a temperate man, he drank freely of the whisky his nostrils detected there, the potent stuff gratefully reviving his shattered frame.

As he dropped the canteen, and as he was about to sink on the hard board bottom in an exhaustion that even the fiery liquor could not immediately overcome, the curtain at the rear was flapped aside and a man leaped in.

A man clad in farmers' gray, wearing a round, peakless cap, with two handsome, black eyes flashing underneath the rim.

Norman McLean!



"Hush!" admonished the young man, placing a finger to his lips warningly. "Jacob Evelyn, can this be you?"

"Ay, all that's left of me, and I fear I am not to last long," groaningly responded the old gentleman.

"Do not talk loud, for although this wagon rumbles and creaks like some old house in a winter's gale, we might be heard, and my life would not be worth a piece of Confederate scrip. Let me examine and attend to that wound I see you have on your head."

He made his way to the side of the wounded gentleman, and using water from one of the canteens, and his own handkerchief, he began to bathe away the smear of blood from the bullet-furrowed scalp.

"Who are you!"

"'Sh! not so loud, I say. I am a friend. You have never met or known me, Mr. Evelyn, but I am your true friend, because I am the dearest friend on earth to your pure daughter, Ida. I saw you when you fell in with the wagon train, and noticing your weak plight, resolved to gain your side, if possible."

"What is your name?"

"Norman McLean."

"Ha! A Northerner?" gazing hard up at the face above him.

"Yes, a Northerner; and you have but to make known that fact to those by whom we are now surrounded, and I will be shot down like a dog."

Norman McLean had escaped death from the revolver-shot delivered by Captain Killbrag in a marvelous manner.

The peakless cap he wore was a sham, and could be altered to a soft-top hat with a stiff brim, in keeping with another change that could be made in the suit of clothes upon his person. This change we are to witness presently.

The stiff rim of the second hat being turned under so as to give the cap its peakless appearance had caught and turned aside the revolver-bullet, though the shock was such as to cause him to believe that he was wounded, and at the same time it stunned him long enough to permit Captain Killbrag to make off with his prey, the beautiful Ida.

At the moment he saw Jacob Evelyn amid the wagon-train the teams were pushing through a narrow place in the road and in a fringe of timber.

By an adroitness that he had acquired since being with the army, he contrived to slip in among the Confederate drivers and their accompanying guards, his gray-colored suit giving him considerable advantage.

Evelyn did not seem inclined to call out to those who rode near the rumbling wagon that there was a man inside who was a rank Northerner; and, in a momentary silence that ensued, McLean asked:



"How did you know that I was from the North?—and you must have heard my name before, to recognize that fact by it?"

"I have heard the name of Norman McLean before and on the lips of my daughter, Ida."

"Ah!"

"Though she did not know it. Yes, I have heard her murmur the name when she thought no one was nigh. And I knew by the tone that whoever Norman McLean was, he must be very dear to the child who has been the idol of my life. I kept the secret of my discovery, knowing that Ida would do no wrong, and that when the proper time came, she herself would tell me of the man named Norman McLean. Because I knew that she must love that person, and because I would never do aught to bring Ida unhappiness, I have been a shield for her against others who have tried to win her from my side, even by threats. If you are Norman McLean, have no fear that I shall ever betray you to those who are your foes. But you are a bold man, sir, if you belong to the army of the North, to enter into the midst of foes in the way you have. What could have influenced you to this perilous step?"

"Solicitude for the father of the lady who is as dear to me as my own life."

"Tell me," Evelyn suddenly asked, "have you seen my daughter within the last forty-eight hours?"

"Yes."

"And she is safe?" hopefully.

"When I last looked into her dear eyes she was safe," replied the lover, speaking partly truth; for he had not seen, after falling, stunned, the rude captor who dragged her away from his side.

And the anxious father seemed to await the answer with so much uneasiness that he deemed it best, in the other's excited and weak condition, not to alarm him by any hint of what might have befallen the fair girl.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### SPYING INSIDE THE LINES.

While Norman McLean continued to hold the conversation with the father of the girl who was his promised bride, the wagon train kept thundering onward at tremendous speed, with the teamsters yelling, whips cracking and the hoofs of mules and horses clattering at a lively rate over the dusty road.

It was almost dark, and though the frightened cavalcade did not know it, Hancock had abandoned his intention of raiding the train because of the nearness of night.

"You surely are not going into the Confederate lines at Spottsylvania?" queried the father of Ida.

"Yes, I believe I shall."



"But if you are discovered and suspected, you will be shot as a spy. For my child's sake, knowing that she loves you, I would not wish to see you thus wantonly throw your life away."

"I will show that much confidence in you, Mr. Evelyn, to tell you that I am, in part, a spy. I may learn something of the enemy's movements that will be of value to the Federal commander,"

"In that attire?"

"No—this."

As the young detective spoke, he made an almost instantaneous transformation in his appearance that was quite astonishing.

In a trice he seemed re-made into the semblance of one of the very teamsters that might have been driving in the train.

On his head was a soft crowned hat with a stiff brim, his long coat tails disappeared, and the color of the coat was changed by turning it inside out.

A roundabout coat he wore now, which opened, buttonless, at the front and displayed a gray, woollen shirt; he tucked his pants into a pair of high boots at a single motion; he affixed to his face a disguising beard; and from some part of his person he drew forth a heavy cart whip, giving it a genuine crack on the bottom of the wagon.

It was the knowledge that he could alter to this disguise which really had made him so bold in coming among the Confederate teamsters—a rough element that exceeded the ranks of the army for dealing with a foe if caught.

In this masquerade he entered with the teams at Spottsylvania; for, to tell the truth, he half believed who Ida's captor was, and thought perhaps to find her somewhere either amid the encampments or intrenchments of the gray host.

Under the welcome cover of night, he moved away from the wagons after they were parked—first having seen that Jacob Evelyn was in no personal danger, and that he was likely to find humane hands to give surgical attention to his sadly wounded head.

Early in the evening the venturesome Unionist found himself near an officer's tent within Lee's inner lines, and the voices he heard therein caused him to halt and listen.

"The cussed Yanks have sent their cavalry right through our lines to cut off our supplies," said one voice.

"Yes, blast 'em! But Stuart is after them, and there'll be some tall cuttin' done when he gets on their rear——"

More that Norman might have heard was prevented by the approach of some one toward the tent.

A tall form passed him by without apparently noticing him—a man whose boots thumped hard on the ground and from whose side hung a clanking saber.



This party flapped aside the opening of the tent and paused an instant on the threshold.

"Hello!" cried one of the officers within. "Killbrag, what the deuce are you doing here?"

"Well, and why should I not be here?" demanded the voice of the trooper captain in a surly manner, betokening an unbounded ill humor.

"Thought you were away with the cavalry sent after the cussed Yanks who have had the impudence to ride right through us."

"No, I have been off in the woods west of here, chasing a lady who is to be my bride——"

"Chasing a lady!"

"Her name is Evelyn. You may have heard of old Evelyn's place opposite Glady Run. She eluded me, however, and is now in the hands of some devil of a crazy man. I hunted until I was tired, and until I thought if I remained away any longer I might stand a chance of court-martial——"

"That is just what you are in a fair way of, I am thinking," said one of the officers, significantly.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, your company was to be one of those sent out by Stuart to attack the Yankee cavalry taking the Fredericksburg road, and not a step have they gone, because you could not be found. What will you do about it?"

"By the dragon of George! is that so?"

At this juncture an aide came hurriedly into the tent, crying out as he saw the captain:

"Captain Killbrag, where have you been? There's the devil to pay. Your strange absence has been reported to Stuart, and you are a lucky man if you escape a severe hauling over. I have been the whole length of the lines looking for you; and your company have been in the saddle since before nightfall——"

"Malediction! Curse my luck!" growled Killbrag, making haste to follow the aide from the tent.

As he went, he muttered:

"I am to be off on a fight, while that man, Sparl—ho! two or three other men—are after my charming Ida! May the fiends swallow my commission! I wish I was out of the army, and I would devote my life to catching this girl whose father, whose dead father, has money stowed away in safe investments in the North."

He tore savagely at his long goatee as he strode along behind the aide.

Norman had learned one important thing by this brief occurrence.

He knew by sight one of the men who were bent on persecuting his betrothed; and he had ascertained that Ida was somewhere in



those woods to the west of the army where he had first so opportunely met her.

"My move now," he resolved, "is to get out of this."

With this object he began to make his way from the tent in search of an opening to elude the Confederate pickets.

It was no easy matter to accomplish this.

Throughout the whole night he was busy with dodging this way and that, and his previous experience in the Army of the Potomac now stood him in good service; just at daybreak, he found himself at a point on high ground overlooking the valley of the Po, whence he could see the blue lines of Hancock, who had bridged and crossed the stream and was advancing on the Confederate intrenchments on the eastern bank, with Brook's brigade, higher up, promulgating a flank movement on the enemy.

Again there was a din of guns on the morning air. Barlow's skirmishers were busily banging away at the foe, when there seemed to come a halt in the advance, and Norman discerned what was, to his familiar eye, a movement of retreat in the Union column.

Then louder burst the deadly guns, as the enemy, encouraged by what they deemed a faltering of fear, sent volleys hurtling among the Yankee front, and sallied, yelling, on the division of Barlow.

There followed then a contest where the bullets flew thick; the brigades of Brook and Brown right bravely met and repulsed the charging lines of gray, and once more, in the woods of Spottsylvania, Lee was exacting his toll of blood from those who sought to crush him.

And another terror than death was abroad on that morning of the tenth. For in the variest heat of the conflict, a startling cry rung along the line of blue.

The timber in their rear was on fire.

Muskets of a hating foe in front, flames of a holocaust behind! For in the crash of falling and blazing boughs many a helpless body was doomed to perish in the sparks, the glowing cinders, the licking tongues of fire; and a sight more terrible than the battle-field was in progress there.

Slowly backward drew the Federal troops, fighting stubbornly over every foot of ground; while the ranks of the Second corps were thinning, thinning frightfully before the rain of lead that mowed among them, mingling with the roar of the burning forest.

There were other shouts—shouts of grim gayety throughout Hill's corps, when Miles' brigade, the last of the hated Yankees, had been beaten back across the Po.

While the Second corps was thus engaged in a destructive action, eastward on the line were booming heavier guns, volleying other sheets of musket flame, where the Fifth, and a portion of the Second corps, were storming the earthworks on the wooded crest in front of Warren.



There among the cedars were piling more dead, heaping more ghastly sights of wounded and dying humans, as the Confederates repulsed, in waves of blood, the charges made upon their impregnable position.

Artillery and the sweeping range of muskets in front of them—nothing daunted, when Hancock's division joined the Fifth, again the boys in blue charged upward—charged to their death by thousands at different times during the day.

Charged until the bravest there were weary and discouraged, and at last, catching the fright which pervaded the brigade of Ward, the boys in blue retreated from the hopeless struggle of Laurel Hill, seeming to defy the efforts of their comrades to restrain them.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### NORMAN FINDS MRS. EVELYN.

Norman had not remained at his point of observation during the whole of that fearful battle of the tenth.

He must be upon the search for Ida, who, he knew, must be somewhere in those woods far in the rear of the Confederate lines, and exposed to all imaginable dangers.

He moved away, pursuing a course that brought him to the cabin where we have seen him take Ida, and where the young girl fell into the clutches of Captain Killbrag.

Feeling the need of food, he lingered here long enough to make a large sandwich of the meat and corn pone, and in his teamster's disguise started forth with only the instinct of his great love to guide him in the search of the one so dear to his heart.

It was a mere chance that led him to the ruin of the Evelyn mansion. Here he met with a surprise.

Standing disconsolately near the charred pile that once was her home, was Mrs. Evelyn.

He instantly divined that it was she, though not knowing her.

Advancing to her side, he said :

"Madam, do I not address Mrs. Evelyn?"

She was a picture of woe, as she stood with clasped hands, and turning at the words, he saw that she was haggard, worn, her eyes sunken in the hollowness of fatigue.

"Who are you, sir?"

"A friend."

"Can you tell me where my husband is—what has become of my child? A few nights ago I had a husband and a child. Both are gone. See"—leveling an emaciated hand at the black heap of the destroyed building—"see what they have done. They killed my husband, and they have robbed me of Ida. Am I going mad? Tell me? Look at me, sir, and tell me if you think I am going mad?"



Her glance was unrested, her eyes seemed to roll and fix half vacantly upon him; and he shuddered as he admitted to himself that Mrs. Evelyn's mind must certainly be deranged.

"My dear lady, I am sorry I cannot give you the information you ask for. But let me suggest that you had best not remain here. You are exposed to dangers in many ways. Come, let me find a shelter for you——"

"Oh, I have shelter enough," she interrupted, swaying her head from side to side and pressing both hands to her temples. "But I want my husband—my child."

"Let us go together and look for them," he urged, wishing to persuade her from the spot.

"You will aid me in the search?"

"Yes. Come with me."

She permitted him to lead her away.

Deep sorrow was within him at this spectacle of Ida's mother in such a pitiable plight; for there could be no doubt that the recent strain upon her mind, coupled to her advanced years, had greatly unsettled her reason, and it would not require much more to plunge her into actual insanity.

As they proceeded, he ascertained, by artful questions, where Mrs. Evelyn had found a refuge after fleeing from her burning home.

And thither he led her.

The cabin of an aged negress, whose wool was white, and who wore a pair of gold spectacles—the latter a gift from Mrs. Evelyn when Deborah, for that was her name, had been a slave in her father's family.

The hut of Deborah was not far from the Evelyn mansion, for the old creature had remained near to the mistress whom she had danced on her knee when a baby.

All alone she lived; and in the humble abode the distracted lady had found a providential haven.

"You have brought me back to old Aunt Deborah's," protested Mrs. Evelyn. "My child is not here. Let us go on. I must find Jacob, and must find Ida."

"De good lamb!" here exclaimed the voice of Deborah, as she appeared in the narrow doorway and saw who was outside. "Come in hyar, honey missus. Come into de inside, do. Who's you, sah? Is you a frien' o' Missus Ev'lyn?"

"Yes, aunty, I am her friend. And I want you to take care of Mrs. Evelyn. She has had a great trouble thrust upon her by divine will, and it is not safe for her to be abroad where the armies of rough men are engaged in a terrible conflict."

"Yah, hm! I doesn't know 'zactly what you says, sah, but I knows what you mean: She done tol' me 'bout de manshun burnin' downd, an' fo' de Lor' I's done my bes' to keep her inside de cabing——"



"And you must do better. There, Mrs. Evelyn, step inside. You are safe here with this good aunty; and if you will remain here I will look for your husband and child. I can accomplish far more toward that end if I am alone. Will you be guided by me, please?"

"Will you bring them to me, surely?"

"If mortal man can do so, I will."

With this assurance, she consented to remain in the cabin of Deborah. Having impressed upon the negress the dangers that might beset the lady if permitted to go forth again, he started off once more on what was a blind hunt for the lost treasure of his heart.

Not far had he gone when he heard a strange sound.

The deep, sonorous baying of hounds, and the short yelp that told they were trailing some one or something.

"Bloodhounds!" he exclaimed. "What can they be hunting here?"

The sound was approaching the spot where he had halted.

Closer and closer it came—closer and swift.

Stepping to one side, he swung himself up into the branches of a tree and climbed far enough to shield him from the observation of whoever might be accompanying the hounds.

He had not long to wait as he watched downward.

Presently beneath the tree appeared at a bound two monstrous bloodhounds. They were running with noses close to the ground following a scent, barking, yelping, and at the spot where Norman had stood for a moment to listen, they suddenly stopped and began racing hither and thither, as if something had occurred to perplex them.

The jaws were wide and foamy with the exertion of a long chase; the tones they gave forth were such as to indicate anger at not having been able, after a prolonged trail, to tree their quarry.

Huge, ferocious, terrible to encounter they were, and Norman wondered what could be the meaning of their presence in this proximity to the battling armies.

While the dogs darted about below he heard a harsh, bowel-accented voice, exclaiming:

"Flay me! but this is strange. All day and all night, and part of another day, have we been on this trail, and not a sign of the lunatic giant yet. Ho! he must have league legs, and his legs have a host of steam in them, to elude the jaws of my hounds—hounds that never before were baffled on a fugitive's track. Forward, here. What is the matter with the dogs? They are thrown off the trail, I verily believe. Fury!"

Under the trees strode the figure of Captain Sam Sparl, followed by two Confederate soldiers.

"They've lost the trail, cap," said one.

"Flame and earth, yes! But they will soon get it again, never



fear. Those pups are pups, let me tell you; and if ever they catch up with the accursed hermit of the hills who has made away with my beautiful Ida Evelyn—Satan seize him!—they will tear his flesh until his bones are white and bare!”

“Ah!” thought Norman, as he looked down from an opening in the leafy branches, “this, then, is the second wretch who is hunting my Ida for his villainous lust! I am glad I know both of her enemies now; and if the opportunity ever offers I will settle an account with them. It would be rashness for me to attack that burly scoundrel now, however. Stay!—would it not be just to her if I shot him as he stands there? I have six good bullets in my revolver, and I am a crack shot. I might easily slay him, and after him the two soldiers, before they could so much as cock their guns.”

But while he hesitated, his spirit revolting from what seemed to him would be actual murder, the opportunity passed.

The hounds gave forth a baying yelp that told they had struck the true trail over which Norman had crossed, and away they darted, with wide and barking jaws, promptly followed by Sparl and his men.

“Come on,” the captain snarled. “I told you we would soon find the trail again. Flame and fire! if I can but get a glimpse of the demon of a man who calls himself, or is called, the hermit of the hills, I shall perforate his accursed carcass with every bullet I carry in my revolvers.”

“And two musket slugs into the bargain, cap,” said the men, in one voice.

The sound of the trailing hounds receded rapidly, and when assured that the brawny, bearded captain had departed in their lead, Norman descended from his perch and made away toward the ruin of the mansion again, as if some invisible monitor was guiding him on his search for the young girl.

“Good Heaven!” he half moaned, with emotion, “permit me to find her and rescue her from whatever danger may be encompassing her; for I know that she is again in the hands of Callis Grimshaw; I know it by what I heard that rascal mutter beneath the tree.”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE FIELD OF SPOTTSYLVANIA.

The afternoon passed without Norman being able to discover anything that would lead him upon the trail of the mad hermit who, he was now apprised, had his betrothed again in a captivity that might result in her death at any minute in the rage Callis Grimshaw felt toward the family of Jacob Evelyn.

Nor did the burly, bearded Captain Sparl seem to have met with any better success, even with the aid of his monster bloodhounds, for, twice before nightfall, he crossed the young man's path, passing within a few yards of where the latter crouched in hiding.



When night had fairly closed in Norman returned to the deserted cabin near the bank of the Po, in a condition of mind deeply dejected.

Throughout the whole of the next day he continued the unavailing search.

Sparl must have either given up the hunt or found the girl, for Norman saw nothing more of the captain, nor heard any further sound to indicate the presence of the bloodhounds in the neighborhood.

The latter possibility gave him additional cause for discouragement and apprehension.

May 11 was notable for another lull in the hostilities of the two great armies of Lee and Grant.

The latter was busy with preparations for a new blow, this time at the right center of the Confederate lines.

A day of comparative silence it was—but the silence that precedes a mighty explosion.

The heavens became overcast and gloomy, as if the unseen things of the elements were affected by the havoc of the red carnage gone before and yet to come.

Toward night the storm had broken amid darkness that made the massing of the divisions more intricate, and added to the depression that had begun to pall upon the depleted ranks of the boys in blue.

Amid the storm and darkness, however, they marched and countermarched—the divisions of Barlow, Brooks, Miles, Brown, Smythe, with Mott and Gibbon held in reserve.

Long ere the dawn came stealing through the foggy air, the army was ready for advance.

Forward, then, the men of Hancock!

Forward, too, the men of Barlow!

The Confederate pickets were driven in or bodily trampled down, and in the early morning there broke forth a ringing cheer from the onswEEPing division, charging the works of the foe at an irresistible double quick.

That ever to be memorable May 12!

The bloodiest, most horrifying struggle of the war was now opened on the field of Spottsylvania.

Resistless as the ocean's waves came the boys in blue upon the hosts that lurked behind the earthworks.

Hand to hand, inside the intrenchments fought the divisions of Birney and Barlow with the savage foe.

Hand to hand, with clubbed muskets and prodding bayonets.

Though brief the storming of the salient, it was bloody and terrible for the Confederate soldiery who were forced at last to flee in confusion, leaving behind thousands of prisoners, artillery and stands of colors.



Sanguinary, and encouraging to the Unionists, after the days and days of useless blood shedding.

The desired opening was at last made in the hitherto solid front of the grays, and Hancock had severed the right and center of the stubborn enemy.

It did not end here.

Smarting under the repulses and losses of the past few days, and eager to avenge their fallen comrades in the flush of a victory, on, on, swept the unrestrainable boys in blue!

Still the guns thundered!

Still there was the clash of opposing steel and the whistle of the deadly slug, as on, on swarmed the victors through the forest, with the cheers and the cries of "Spottsylvania!" welling rousing-ly from their thousands of throats.

On to Spottsylvania!

Not yet!

Suddenly burst the booming throats of fresh batteries in front; suddenly reared another wall of formidable breastworks manned by the Confederate reserves.

Then into the ranks of blue poured volleys and volleys, until they were driven back, back to the captured line and forced upon the defensive.

For awhile the Second corps seemed yielding before the assault of the rallied masses who were now in turn the assailants.

For awhile the blue lines quivered under the galling fire and impetuous charges of the maddened foe.

Then another volume of cheers—new cheers as the Sixth corps reached the field just in the nick of time to aid in hurling back the yelling waves of gray that Lee had sent to recapture the lost line.

While the carnage lasted here, up on the air rose the reverberating boomings of the battle that Burnside on the left, and Warren on the right, were pushing with vigor.

Ghastly twelfth of May!

Loud beat the drums and shrill shrieked the bugle blast.

Volleyed the flaming lines of muskets—and above all the dull and earthquaking belch of artillery busy mowing through the double forest of trees and soldiery.

Against the Second and Sixth corps Lee seemed to direct the fiercest of his efforts; but the divisions of Cutler and Griffin had then arrived, and on both sides of the works, at times almost within saber reaching distance, one or the other, were planted the glorious stars and stripes and the stars and bars of the frantic host that sought in vain to recover the bloody angle of vantage they had lost.

Memorable twelfth of May!

Like rain the humming slugs! Like billows of the sea, glinting



in a slanting sun, the polished bayonets that struck remorselessly into brave bosoms.

Piling, piling were the dead.

Shrieking unheard amid the whirling Golgotha were the lacerated beings whose pierced and dying bodies were stretched on the rise of the works by the bayonets of Hancock.

Hideous the spectacle!

But the day counted on its red-historied hours, and still the air trembled with the resonance of cannon, with the rattle of muskets in streaming flame and showers of slugs, till the very timber round was cut and toppled as by a reaper's scythe.

Horrifying twelfth of May!

Five times the startled general, Lee, had hurled his bleeding troops upon the Federal divisions that held the corpse-strewn angle.

Five times they were driven back, leaving their dead in very hills to sicken the heart of a beholder who might not have been swayed by the emotions of valor and antagonism that possessed the Union army on that bloody day.

Day and night—for far into the dark hours the struggle lasted—until the Confederate commander, almost in tears, withdrew his heroes into his interior position.

Oh, solemn midnight, that midnight of the twelfth of May!

And still the lines of Spottsylvania remained intact.

A dense pall of smoke hung over the battle plain and lingered in cloudy wreaths around the tree-tops.

Heaven seemed veiled from the frightful devastation there.

The burly rogue, Captain Sam Sparl, had become lost from his regiment because of that futile hunt after Ida Evelyn, and when, in a raving humor, he had given over the search for her with his ferocious hounds, he returned to report for duty only to find himself assigned to a strange company that was being sent to the works afterward captured in the early charge we have described.

An additional wound marked the bearded captain after that retreat before the charging boys in blue.

This time a glancing slug had furrowed the other side of his shaggy head.

It necessitated another bandage at an opposite angle with the one he already wore; and thus, with both bandages coming down over his face until he had to throw back his head and peep from under them in order to see at all, he was a sight of wounds and rage.

"Flame and fury!" he expleted, growlingly, as he thus walked about at a safe distance from the waging battle. "I am blinded by the accursed Yankee bullets! I cannot see my charming Ida, if I find her, without carrying my head as if my neck was broken. Pits swallow the Yankees! Look at me!"—to a comrade more painfully wounded than himself—"I am a walking image of blindness; and



of rage, mind that! I swear that I shall kill everything after this—if it be so much as a cat—which has a speck of blue on it. Flay me!”

When night came on, the captain sought out the spot where he had tied up his fierce hounds, and taking them in hand, and having obtained hospital leave, he started once more for the vicinity where he believed Ida Evelyn still to be in the clutch of the madly roaming hermit of the hills.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A TOMB OF FIRE.

The Union army was now gradually massing toward the east of Spottsylvania Court House.

That vicinity where has transpired so much of the early drama of our narrative was rapidly becoming deserted by the conflicting forces; perhaps very few more than the inevitable accumulation of stragglers remained in the chaparral to the west of the court house.

The presence of these was, however, more jeopardizing to the safety of Norman McLean than when the din of battle had sounded there.

While his heart ached for Ida, and he would have dared and done anything to discover where she could be, he governed his love-born impulses by a reason that showed how injudicious would be an exposure of his person, which might result in his capture and thus prevent all future effort in her behalf.

He remained within his cabin retreat during the tumult of the day that was red and smoky with the fray at Laurel Hill.

The noon hour had passed, when he caught a sound that caused him to hasten to the doorless doorway and peer forth—as he had done time and again since daylight.

Several voices, loud and coarse, raised in half jest and half quarrelsome accent.

Outside, near the bank of the stream, were half a dozen Confederates, some with muskets and some without.

Stragglers they undoubtedly were, and badly they had been faring, to judge by their cavernous eyes and bedraggled garb.

Within earshot of the hidden cabin they came to a halt, and presently Norman saw another of the gray crew coming slower in the rear, his steps bending under the weight of a keg.

“Hold on, there!” this last growled. “You think it is an easy job to lug this thing as fast as you fellers choose to walk. Let’s call a halt!”

“Y-a-s, an’ bu’st the keg open, say I,” spoke another.

“So be it.”

Then they congregated around the keg.

A few minutes later the bung was forced, and the odor of whisky



filled the air as one after another emptied his tin cup full and withdrew to squat on the earth near by.

"Plenty o' stuff to guzzle," remarked one, after a vigorous draught from his cup, "but nothin' to eat."

"An' I'm almost starved,"

"I feel like my stomach didn't know where it's been at."

"It's all very well keepin' out o' the road o' the Yankee slugs, comrades, but one thing: we got some grub, few an' far though it war. I'll be glad when the fightin's over, so we kin get back to camp an' scrape up somethin' to eat. There's not even a hen roost roun' hyar to rob."

"Ugh!" grunted all, in disgust, at the sparse foraging facilities of the vicinity.

Again the tin cups were filled from the fumey keg.

"Very plainly," thought Norman, as he watched the orgie; "These fellows will presently be drunk; and in their blind staggering they may fall upon my place of concealment. I cannot afford to risk an encounter with them, while Ida is in peril. Oh, that I could find her!"

Forthwith he stole cautiously from the cabin, crouching among the tangled growth until he gained its rear; then he hurried away from the spot where the stragglers were becoming tipsy as the moments passed.

But not far had he gone when he was checked—not by a sound, but by a sight a short distance ahead of him—a sight that sent a thrill through his veins.

Coming directly toward him was the mad hermit of the hills.

The tall Hercules was carrying his left arm in a sling improvised from a lithe switch.

Fortunately, at the moment Norman discovered him, he was gazing hard downward at the ground as he came along, like one who is bent upon following a trail.

He did not see the man ahead.

"I have found the abductor," breathed the young man, suppressedly, and in a peculiar joy. "I must not lose sight of him. And thanks to my knowledge of these woods, and the circumstance which has brought this meeting about at this particular spot, I have the means of concealment at hand!"

This means consisted of a huge log which Norman had frequently noticed in his wanderings through the timber stretch—a log that had rotted away at one end until there was a considerable hollow in which a man might, with little inconvenience, secrete himself.

Noiselessly he sprung aside and crawled into the opportune hiding-place.

And none too soon; for at the very instant he accomplished this, the maniac overheard the boisterous sound of the stragglers' voices not far in his front, and he threw his hoary head up like



some animal who suddenly scents a danger in the surrounding air.

Then his movements became as stealthy as the gliding panther, while he continued to advance.

Into his glaring orbs shot an ignescent brilliancy; he threw his tall body slightly forward like a crouching beast of prey that steals upon an unsuspecting victim.

Straight on he went; and Norman thought as he passed the log within a few feet of its opening that the fiery orbs once turned to glance into the cavity discoveringly.

"Does he mean to attack the stragglers?" the young man asked himself, warily watching after the herculean figure from the ragged edge of the opening.

The question was presently answered.

It was not many yards between the log and the spot where the Confederates were holding starved men's revel over the whisky keg, though the intervening trees shut out a view of them.

Suddenly there broke forth a howling cry, a screech that ended almost in a canine's bark of shrillness and curdling tone.

Following this a shout of dismay and pain from several throats, and Norman could hear what sounded like terrible thudding blows and the crush of bones.

Mingling in the significant disturbance was a single musket-shot—a shot and another cry simultaneously, the latter indicating a mortal agony.

Then all was still as the grave.

Norman was on the point of leaving his concealment, when he was arrested by seeing the mad hermit retracing his steps toward the log.

His brow was wild, and his garments wore splatters of fresh blood. In his arms—one of which was in the sling from the effect of the wound administered by the revolver of Captain Killbrag in a former chapter—he carried all the muskets that the stragglers had possessed, and over one shoulder was flung a strung lot of tin cups and pouches.

From the loose bosom of his shirt were exposed more than one peace of garment stripped from the persons of those he had, beyond all doubt, slain.

Norman shuddered.

"Can it be possible," he wondered, "that this crazy being has overpowered and killed the whole of the straggler company? What chance would I have, then, for my life, if he and I were to come to an encounter? Ha! has he discovered me?"

For the lunatic, Grimshaw, had deliberately paused and stooped to peer into the black interior of the log.

Then he unslung the articles he carried on his back and laid down the captured muskets.

Norman, in an indescribable sensation of suspense, lay curled up



quiet as a mouse, listening to the almost inaudible footsteps of the maniac, who appeared to be busy at something about the log.

With cocked revolver ready, he kept his gaze on the opening, expecting momentarily to see the terrible monster of a man come crawling in after him; for he was sure those glowing orbs had seen him when they glanced inward.

Round and about the log moved the hermit destroyer.

And ere long the concealed man knew—learned with a feeling of shrinking horror, what was being done.

A slight smell of smoke came to his nostrils. More perceptible it grew, until there could be no doubt that there was being a fire built around the log.

Yes, the maniac knew that he was there.

He was to be roasted alive!

That—or venture, for his life's sake, from the only opening, to be crushed by a club in the hands of the infernal-minded demon.

It would be impossible to describe Norman's dismay at the discovery of his predicament. Brave and strong of nerve though he was, this dilemma, where there appeared to be no alternative but death, was such as to chill his heart.

And now the smoke of the burning log began to creep in at the only open end, to stifle and smother out his life if he remained there.

"Good God!" he moaned, in a whispered gasp. "Am I to die thus? Death in here—death waiting outside, for I am doomed the instant my head appears to receive the madman's blow! Ah! Heaven help me! What am I to do?"

Just then the harsh voice of the demon maniac exclaimed:

"Come out! Come out! Ha, ha, ha! I will have blood—blood to fill up my cup of vengeance for the past! All, all, are the doomed enemies of Callis Grimshaw! Come out! I am waiting for you. Ha, ha, ha!"

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## CHAPTER XX.

### A NARROW ESCAPE.

Truly, it seemed that Norman McLean must die—perish miserably within the burning log, or receive his death blow from the madman who was a foe to all mankind in his rabid lunacy.

But a circumstance transpired just at the moment when the young man had resolved to risk a hasty exit from his burning encasement which completely altered the aspect of affairs in his favor.

There was a noise of approaching horsemen and a jangle of saber scabbards close by.

"Malediction! Look, there he is!" sounded a voice,

The voice of Captain Killbrag.



The captain had escaped any overhauling on account of his previous absence from his company, because of his worth as a fighter, and had caught up with the cavalry force sent to fall upon Sheridan's rear when the latter started out to cut off Lee's source of supplies.

The repulse of the Confederate cavalry in the short encounter that followed this movement resulted in a more careful organization, and while additional troopers had been sent forward, Killbrag received orders to return to the vicinity of the court house to participate in the terrific engagement which the commanders of both armies saw was to come.

It so happened, however, that Killbrag's company was not called into the action which was at this very moment transpiring in all its fury, and, instead, he was sent on a scouting expedition to westward to make note of the Federal movements at that point along the line.

And although the guns of Warren were then engaging the gray host on Lee's left, and quite close to the scene of our drama, Killbrag had resolved:

"By the dragon of George! I am in luck. For I shall do no especial scouting except to look for my beautiful prize, the angelic Ida Evelyn."

To several of his men he communicated his intention, and notwithstanding they were of a material that would just as lief have entered the bloody arena of Laurel Hill, they entered into the spirit of their captain's search for the lovely maiden he proposed making his bride, whether she willed it or not, and were on the lookout as well as he for some sign of the giant lunatic who, he told them, had her in his possession.

Chance guided the persistent captain and his troopers to the very spot where Norman McLean was so unfortunately on the verge of his death, and as he came upon the singular scene he exclaimed the words:

"Malediction! look, there he is!"

The maniac wheeled from his hungry watch of the open end of the log where he expected his victim to issue forth.

He glared upon the troop of horsemen with orbs of fire.

For a moment he seemed about to lanch himself among them.

"Ready, here!" shouted Killbrag, to those nearest to him.

"Ready! aim——"

A dozen carbines clicked and raised to a level with the body of the maniac, who stood rigidly and defiantly before them.

The troopers crowded forward, fifty or more, and as each man caught sight of the strange being, and their comrades about to empty their carbines upon him, other carbines were thrust forward to an aim.

The sight of his peril must have impressed the hermit. The muzzles of the carbines were pointed full at him; the hammers were



waiting the last command to fall and explode the bullets into his person.

Quickly dodging low, and at the very instant Killbrag shouted the order to fire, he escaped the discharge and darted away into the timber.

"Malediction!" Killbrag snarled, loudly. "Ready again! Aim! Fire! Bring him down! A keg of whisky to my company if we kill that devil of a man!"

Again the carbines barked.

The madman was safe within the undergrowth; and as the balls hummed and cut harmlessly around him, he vented his peculiar, curdling cry, its tone full of a jubilant defiance.

"Forward?" ordered Killbrag. "Deploy, scatter, run the vagabond down! After him! Malediction!"

He urged his own horse swiftly ahead, breaking recklessly through brush and brier and dodging the branches that would have swept him from his saddle.

The fifty troopers plunged in an opening line into the woods, flying hither and thither, some with drawn sabers, in the exciting pursuit.

Exciting, because anon came to their ears the voice of the madman in its horrible screech of bantering mockery.

In a few seconds the little space where lay the burning log, was completely deserted.

Satisfying himself of this fact, Norman crawled hurriedly forth and ran for the cover beyond and in an opposite direction to that taken by the troopers.

"Thank God!" he breathed, fervently. "I am saved from a wretched fate, though unintentionally, by the man who is one of the persecutors of my darling Ida. Oh, thank God!"

The gratefulness he felt to the kind Providence that had thus interceded in his behalf, was more because of the opportunity it left him for continuing his search for the young girl who seemed to have so strangely vanished.

Rapidly he kept on his course away from the glade, and shortly found himself for a second time in the vicinity of the Evelyn mansion.

Here at the verge of the timber he paused.

For he was surprised to see there the figure of Jacob Evelyn, standing in a sorrowful contemplation of his desolated home.

"Mr. Evelyn!" he called, advancing toward the old gentleman.

"McLean! it is you?"

"Yes. How came you to be here?"

"I could not remain away. I received such attention as nearly healed my wound and brought back my strength; but the wound in my heart cannot be healed when I know not what has become of my wife and child."

"Your wife is safe."



"Praise Heaven for that. But Ida——"

"Alas, I cannot find her. And I know that she is not within the Confederate lines."

"Where can she be?"

"It is a mystery which I must, which I will, unravel. But let me lead you to your wife, Mr Evelyn; she is not very far from here."

Together they left the pile of ruin.

When Norman brought Ida's father to the cabin of old Deborah, they found Mrs. Evelyn on the rude couch there in a high fever, and not capable of recognizing her husband.

"De po' missus done got de 'liriums," said the negress, solemnly. "I gin 'er some tea, an' she don' seem no better, Massa Evelyn. It must be she done gone clean crazy, I's afeard——"

"Hush!" whispered Norman, as Mr. Evelyn stepped to the side of the couch. "He is well nigh distracted himself, and if he apprehends anything serious to his wife we may have two sick people on our hands. Be careful, and do not alarm him."

"Yah-m."

"Martha," spoke the husband, gently, and taking one of the feverish hands in his own.

But only an articulate sound answered him, as if the mind, in a torture of pain, was striving to retain its balance vainly.

"Perhaps we had better let her sleep," suggested Norman.

"Dat's wot I gi'n her de tea fo'," said Deborah. "Bes' lef' her 'lone, Massa Evelyn."

They then withdrew from the couch, Norman saying, encouragingly:

"I do not apprehend that it is anything more than the result of her exhausted condition. The sleep will revive her and break the fever. I would like to have a little talk with you, Mr. Evelyn."

"What is it?" as they went to the door and seated themselves on the rickety stoop.

"I am glad we met as we did in the wagon train, and that you were prepared to hear me announce myself as Ida's betrothed. It will remove some of the restraint I might have felt in approaching a certain subject relative to my business in this neighborhood."

"You came to see Ida, I suppose?"

"In part—yes. But something of additional and vast importance brings me here. I am engaged as a detective in the North, and here in Virginia I am following a strange trail."

"Indeed?"

"I seek a man. It was one who was terribly wronged in the past; so much so, that I know he is at this moment a wanderer and a dangerous maniac in these very woods about us. I wish to ask you a few questions which I am sure that you can answer."

"What like, sir?"



"Concerning this man of whom I speak, and who sustained the wrong I hint at a period of nearly twenty years ago."

"Twenty years ago!"

The exclamation was sudden and husky as it came from Mr. Evelyn's lips.

He turned his gaze quickly, searchingly upon the other's face, and his features were of a strange pallor.

"Twenty years ago," he repeated. "What can you have to say to me of events that transpired twenty years ago?"

Norman did not immediately reply.

As he made remarks calling forth the sharp question, he also made a thrilling discovery.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE STORY OF JACOB EVELYN.

It will be remembered that when Norman showed the photograph to Ida, in the cabin, which was found by him in the arbor near Callis Grimshaw's home in lower Maryland, at a long period after the mysterious murder of Mrs. Grimshaw, there was discernable on the face of the picture, at the line of the whiskers which the original then wore, a mark or line like a delicate scar.

We have seen the perturbation of the young girl, when she exclaimed that the man who had wronged Callis Grimshaw must have been her own father; but while she could not repress the cry of recognition as she gazed upon the handwriting of the faded note, she did not betray that she had seen more to point toward her father as the cause of Grimshaw's woe.

This other item Norman McLean now saw for himself.

As he returned the steadfast gaze of Jacob Evelyn, he discovered on the latter's cheek a mark that would agree with the shape and extent of the mark that was visible in the photograph, though it was less distinct now, after the passage of all these years.

"Heaven!" he thought; "can Ida have been right in her suspicion—and Jacob Evelyn is, indeed, the author of the wreck I have seen roaming through these woods? But it cannot be! Besides, there is both a likeness and a difference in the faces of Jacob Evelyn and the photograph I carry in my pocket."

"What have you to say to me about something that happened twenty years ago?" Evelyn again questioned.

"Mr. Evelyn, let me speak as delicately as possible. I am searching for a man named Callis Grimshaw."

"Callis Grimshaw!"

The echoing repetition of the name came between teeth that were clinched in an inward drawn breath.

"What is it, sir? I hope I have not startled you?"

"Startled me? Oh, no. What should startle me? It is nothing



but a twinge from this hurt on my head. Just look at it, and you will see that it is no slight affair."

He bared his head and leaned forward for the other to examine the bandaged wound; but the act was to hide a contortion of his pale face, as he was murmuring in his soul:

"Callis Grimshaw! What knows he of that man—that demon who has been on my track for these twenty years? Heart of my soul! I am innocent of wrong toward Callis Grimshaw; and yet I am pursued, hunted by the nightmare of his sworn vengeance, which I do not deserve. What can this man, Norman McLean, the lover of my dear Ida, know of Callis Grimshaw? And he has said that he wishes to ask me some questions regarding an affair of twenty years ago—the very date."

Aloud he said, with an evident effort:

"You wish to speak of this Callis Grimshaw? What about him—whoever he is?"

"Did you not know him?"

"What makes you think so?"

"That is an evasion."

"Well, yes, I did know him; that is, twenty years ago."

"Did you know of the great suffering that was brought upon him at the time?"

"Yes," with some hesitancy.

"Mr. Evelyn, I am familiar with the past of Callis Grimshaw and the item of the murder of his wife, after she had deserted the husband who adored her. I am on the trail of that man, believing that he has discovered the one who wronged him by first robbing him of and then murdering his wife, and have a hope of extracting from him the secret of who the party is, if I am right in my theory."

"What is your object?"

"First to bring the murderer to justice; second to secure the reward which is still on the county books of Dorchester, in Maryland. It is a snug sum."

"You will never find the murderer of Callis Grimshaw's wife," said the old gentleman, slowly.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I know that he is dead."

"Dead?"

A silence fell.

The thunderous boomings of the distant battle came to their hearing in dull quaverings on the air that was so solemnly hushed around them there.

Presently Evelyn said:

"I think I had better tell you all that I know about that sad affair. I must, for I am suffering a torture that I cannot bear—I am a fugitive from the everlasting hate of Callis Grimshaw, who, I have learned, has sworn to have my life as the destroyer of his



happiness. I do not deserve it—I do not, as God is my witness. I never did him any wrong. But I know that he is insane, and that his mind is diseased with the one thought that to me he owes his lifelong misery."

His voice sunk almost to a sob as he said this.

"Let me hear the story, Mr. Evelyn."

"I will." And after a pause: "When I went to reside in lower Maryland, I was a single man. I was taken sick, and as I had a brother living in Baltimore, I sent for him to attend me. He came. This brother was a striking counterpart of myself. He was younger than I, however. While with me he made the acquaintance of Mrs. Grimshaw, who, I must say, was a remarkably handsome woman. He went so far as to begin a flirtation with her, and one day gave me a topaz ring which, he said, he had persuaded her to let him wear.

"I tried all in my power to have him [forego what I saw could only end in serious trouble; but he was obstinate. At last it came to an exchange of pictures. But as he had none of his own, he purloined one of mine from an album and easily passed it off upon the lady as his because of our remarkable likeness to each other and——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Norman, interruptingly.

He drew the photograph from his pocket and held it up to view.

"Is that the one, Mr. Evelyn?"

"Yes, it must be. But I will not ask how you came by it—in the course of your detective investigation, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Callis Grimshaw must have seen that picture," the old gentleman added, "and obtained what he believed to be the clew to the foe who had entered his household. But to resume. It pains me to have to acknowledge that my brother actually won the affection of the hitherto devoted wife, and one day came to me with a scared face, announcing that he feared she loved him so well as to be unguarded, even ready to avow it if challenged. Not until then did he awaken to the sin he had at first plunged into with no serious intention. The lady was growing too passionately fond of him. He must run away, he said, or he feared the direst consequences. Luckily I was convalescing. He went that very night, and I accompanied him as far as Baltimore.

"Remaining in that city for several days, I returned to my home to find that there had been a tragedy enacted. Mrs. Grimshaw, finding herself deserted by the man who had won her love from her husband, had fled from her home, and no one knew whither she had gone, until the day she was found on the beach with every indication on her person of having been murdered. But I—I alone of all the world knew that she had not been murdered. It was suicide! Nevertheless, I considered my brother the murderer of the unhappy woman. How do I know it was suicide? I will tell



you that. The first one to find her was an old negro whose hut was near the beach. The first person he met was myself. He had found in the suicide's delicate and rigid hand a slip of water-stained paper, a note to the man who had driven her to the desperate act in very shame. I possessed myself of it. The lines addressed to my brother were pitiful in the extreme. I bribed the negro to keep secret the fact of finding the note.

"Then I suddenly came aware that the wronged husband must have found my picture, which my brother had given Mrs. Grimshaw as his own, for he was heard to utter threats directly against my life if we ever met. For my own safety, then, I was obliged to flee, hoping that an opportunity might offer later, when he was not in the hot heat of his rage, to explain—if I could do so without implicating my brother—how it was impossible that I, who had so long lain on a sick bed could have been guilty of that which he attributed to me. But Callis Grimshaw lost his reason entirely, and I had no alternative then but to flee, flee on, flee ever, to avoid his avenging pursuit. Think, if you can, what misery I have endured all these years, with a mad Nemesis on my track, who might strike a death-blow at any unexpected moment."

Norman here opened and spread before Mr. Evelyn the letter which had also been found in the portmonnaie, in the arbor.

"Is that your writing?" he asked.

"Yes. Good Heaven! how came you by that?"

Norman explained the circumstance of his finding it.

Evelyn uttered a deep groan.

"No wonder—no wonder Callis Grimshaw believed me to be the serpent who destroyed his home. Yes, it is my own writing. But hear me while I speak the truth regarding it."

Another groan, and a pause, as Jacob Evelyn, upon seeing the letter of such affectionate contents which he acknowledged to be his own handwriting, seemed even more deeply affected than during the whole of his recital."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE BAY OF BLOODHOUNDS.

Norman quietly waited for the other to speak.

"Yes," said the hunted man, "I can understand better now why Callis Grimshaw has hounded me so unrelentingly. That letter I did indeed write. But it was not written to Mrs. Grimshaw. You will perceive that it is without either address or signature. It was not intended for her at all."

And he added, after another pause, as if waiting for Norman to say something:

"At that time I was engaged to be married to Martha Cheswick, my present wife, the mother of Ida. She lived in Virginia. I wrote to her often as I lay on my couch helpless in my sickness, and it



was my custom to first 'rough' the letters I meant to send her in order to have them both tender and perfect, as should be all letters written by a lover to his sweetheart.

"That which you hold in your hand is one of those 'roughs'—I remember it well; every letter I wrote in those hopeful days is almost engraven verbatim on my mind. It must be that my wild and thoughtless brother sent Mrs. Grimshaw that as an epistle from himself, and the fact of absence of address or signature was not surprising considering the danger they both were in during the period of their wicked love.

"I have said that you could never find the murderer of Mrs. Grimshaw, because he was dead—died long ago," and Evelyn averted his head to conceal another pang that came athwart his face.

"While I was thus fleeing from the man who had sworn to have my life, and toward whom I was innocent of any wrong, I heard from my wayward brother. Not in his own hand, but in a way that cast a shadow over my name before the public. At the far North, in some popular hotel at a resort, he had deliberately blown out his brains!

"It was after a period of sickness, said the physician whom I found at his bedside when I reached there. From the physician I learned that for a long spell my brother had raved mysteriously about a murder—about some beautiful woman whose name must have been Anne, for continually on the lips of the bedridden sufferer was the name of Anne—Anne!

"Ah! no one knew what I knew then. It was not the torture of sickness that had driven my brother to the desperate act of suicide.

"In his heart had come the terrible demon of remorse, tearing, crazing, until earth became a hell of torment to his loaded mind. It is ever thus. Wickedness must find its languishment and at last its fearful wages.

"But consider my own life, now that the only witness who could have thrown Callis Grimshaw from my track, even had he been capable of listening to reason, was dead. I saw before me a whole hunted life.

"With my family—for I had married meantime and sought the secluded mansion in Virginia—I endeavored to keep from mixing in the world, hoping that a kind Providence would shield me from the unjust vengeance of Callis Grimshaw.

"Living in constant dread, yet I dared not move lest I make worse my condition for safety, and it was only a few nights ago that my wife spoke lightly of how easy it would be for us to seek some spot more secure from the devastation of the war.

"But she did not know—she did not know. I have never had the courage to tell her the secret which has made my life almost a curse—"



At this juncture both were astonished by a voice behind them.

"I have heard it now, though, Jacob—nearly the whole of it. Ah, why did not you tell me all this sad history before? Did you think my love was not strong enough to comfort you?"

Mrs. Evelyn stood behind them. The traces of the fever were still in her face; but her gaze was rational, and her old eyes were suffused with emotion's tears, as she bent and twined her arms around old Jacob's neck with all the tenderness she was wont to exhibit in those earlier days of their love.

"I should have known this before, dear Jacob," she said.

"Ah, Martha, I did not wish to shift even a portion of my burden on you."

"And so you have ever been, thoughtful only of me. But we must take courage together, now. Your dangers are my dangers; what you suffer, I must suffer, too. And we will pray together, Jacob, that God in his mercy will defend us from this sadly mistaken man who seeks to do you an unmerited injury. But who is this?" turning to Norman.

"A dear friend, Martha. His name is Norman McLean."

"My husband's friends are mine, too," she said, extending her hand to the young man.

Jacob gave him a meaning look which plainly said:

"At present, it would be wise to let no hint fall that you are a Northerner, for Martha is a Southern woman, with all the warm love for her native soil which makes this wretched war so hideous."

Norman understood the glance as well as if the sentence was spoken.

After a few words with Mrs. Evelyn, he suggested:

"Is it judicious, madam, for you to be standing here? You are yet weak, I am sure."

"You are right, sir. But I heard Jacob talking with one who had a strange voice, and, I presume, it was mere curiosity that enabled me to come from my resting-place. I will lay down again."

Supported by her husband she withdrew.

It was now late in the afternoon.

Still boomed the guns afar, and volumned the waves of musketry that told of the continued struggle at Laurel Hill and in the fronts of Burnside and Warren.

Old Deborah had prepared a repast from her little cupboard—a meal that showed she was accustomed to living on mere bits and odds, yet there was enough, with the well made tea, to satisfy whose who were thus thrown under her humble roof in the hour of peril; and her black face beamed with satisfaction at being able to do something for those who had shown her so many kindnesses in the past.

"Dar's de tea, an' dar's de pone wot I baked in de ashes my own



self, Massa Ev'lyn, an' jes' sit you right down dar, an' let ole Deb wait on you's like she war 'custom'd to do in de long 'go time 'fore Massa Cheswick lay in de grave war de Lo'd done flung 'im."

Plain though it was, the hearts of all were full of a prayer to Heaven for the mercy of the refuge they were enjoying amid so many dangers.

Still there was a gloom over the minds of those within Deborah's cabin.

Where, during all this interval, could Ida be?

Darkness had come down, and Deborah had lighted an old lamp of rather unsavory flame, when Norman said:

"I must leave you now."

"Where are you going?" Jacob asked.

"To look for Miss Evelyn," he replied, cautious to avoid speaking of Ida with the freedom of an acknowledged lover's address, as he observed that Mrs. Evelyn was listening.

"May God speed you in the search, sir," said the anxious mother. "Do you think anything serious can have befallen her?"

"Oh, no; at least we will not think it possible until there seems to be no hope of finding her. As it is, I have reason for saying that I know she must be somewhere in these woods."

He paused to examine his revolver, and then stepped toward the door to take his departure, when to the ears of all came an ominous sound.

The deep, sonorous baying of hounds.

Norman had heard that same sound before in the chaparral, and he recognized the tones of the bloodhounds he knew belonged to the ruffian, Sparl.

"Ah!" he thought, "the scoundrel is again abroad after my darling Ida. I begin to feel that if he once more crosses my track I shall not be able to resist the temptation to shoot him."

"What is that noise?" questioned Mrs. Evelyn, nervously.

"Oh! you have heard it often enough, I am sure, Martha," Jacob Evelyn responded. "You have not forgotten the bay of a bloodhound. Your father had a magnificent kennel, I remember——"

"Bloodhounds!" she exclaimed. "What are they doing here, Jacob?" and she half started from her couch with a frightened expression on her feverish face. "Jacob, suppose the hounds, if they are bloodhounds, and I now recognize that curdling note which they make when on a dead trail, should fall upon Ida, who may be roaming in the woods. Merciful God, preserve her! Oh, Heaven, keep my child from the fangs of the bloodhounds——"

"My dear madam," Norman spoke, soothingly, "do not give yourself unnecessary uneasiness. It is, no doubt, some squad from the Southern army hunting for Yankee stragglers in the timber—nothing more."



The sound drew nearer. The hounds were approaching the cabin.

The negress, becoming aware of this, seemed suddenly taken with an ague. Her coal-black face turned to a peculiarly ashen hue, and her eyes rolled from one to another of those near her. Familiar enough to her were those terrible notes from the fangy jowls of the great Southern bloodhound. Well she knew the meaning of the yelping bay that told of a mad pursuit of someone. Her knees quaked as if she were the guilty one those hungry and merciless animals were coming after, and her hands wrung in her apron, and her few remaining teeth chattered in a shivering way.

"De Lo'd preserve ouah souls!" she tremblingly articulated. 'Dey's comin', Massa Ev'lyn—dey's comin' right hyar, I knows dey is."

And she appeared to be correct, for nearer and nearer drew the warning note of the swiftly advancing hounds; louder became the noise from their red throats, indicating that they must be gaining upon the hunted quarry.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE TRAIL.

Nearer and nearer the hounds, barking, baying, yelping.

Norman stepped to Mr. Evelyn's side, and whispered:

"I know the owner of those dogs."

"Who is it?"

"A man whose name is Sparl——"

"Ha! Captain Sparl?"

"The same."

"What can he be after?"

"I know, but I have not time to explain. The hounds—the captain—are coming here, that is evident. I must not be seen."

"Bnt who could those animals be trailing here?"

"That is a question there is no time to discuss. Certainly, neither you nor Mrs. Evelyn, and I hardly think this negress. But I must begone. There is no chance of concealment here, and I cannot run any risk that may deter me from instant search for Ida. I will not go far, however, and wait to see that the scoundrel—for he is a scoundrel—offers you no harm. Ha! mercy! that was a narrow escape!"

For just then something passed with a swift whirr directly between the faces of the two men, something that gleamed as it passed, and sunk into the opposite wall with a thud and a half ring quiver.

A monstrous knife!

In astonishment Norman gazed at the imbedded weapon.

But Evelyn had seen the source from whence it was hurled; his glance rested on the one open window of the cabin.



His face turned deathly pale, and a groan came from him. He saw a dreaded face at the margin of the sill.

"Callis Grimshaw!" he gasped.

And simultaneously there sounded the curdling screech of the mad hermit of the hills, as that frightful-visaged personage disappeared from the window where he had been glowering inward.

For once his aim with the terrible hurling knife had providentially failed.

"What—who is it?" Norman exclaimed.

"My relentless foe, Callis Grimshaw."

"At that window?"

"Yes."

"No matter, I must go through that window and take my chances. Chances they are, for already I have been near losing my life at the hands of that demon. Here goes."

With a bound he reached and vaulted over the sill, disappearing in the darkness beyond.

There was not a moment to lose if he wished to avoid a meeting with the ruffian persecutor of Ida Evelyn and that ruffian's ferocious hounds, for now the beasts, with renewed bayings and the short, snappish sound that indicates a closing upon the prey, were almost at the cabin door.

Five seconds later they were scampering around the cabin, snarling angrily and increasing the terror of the negress, Deborah, who had sunk to her knees in the weakness of fright.

The uproar of the snarling dogs continued around the cabin on every side, but they seemed not inclined to approach the door. Mad and furious they were at something that had evidently happened to destroy the fresh scent that told they were almost on their hunted prey.

Presently was heard a heavy tramp outside, and the next moment there came a thumping on the cabin door, which Norman had closed when they sat down to the scant repast spread by Deborah.

"Ho, in there!" roared the voice of Captain Sam Sparl. "Who is in there? Come, open this door, for I am half blind. Open, I say, or I shall first break my way in and afterward set my hounds on you, whoever lives here, to tear you into a million shreds! Flame and smoke! Open, I say—ha!"

The last as Mr. Evelyn threw the door wide open and said:

"If I am not mistaken, I recognize the voice of Captain Sparl. Is it you, captain?"

"Flay me! Mr. Evelyn!"

"Yes, it is I."

Sparl threw back his bandaged head to look in at the old gentleman, his bleary eyes but partly visible and savage under the swathes that we have said came down on his face so far as to nearly obstruct his sight entirely.

"Where is your daughter?" demanded the captain.

"Heaven only knows—I do not," was the sad reply.

"Have you not seen her within a day, two days?"

"I have not."

"Well, I am about to find her. Do you hear me? I am about to find her. I am tired with trying to win her for a bride after the knightly style. She is to be my wife—do you hear me? Fury of earth! yes. These are times when I shall not take the trouble to go a courting. By the burnt powder of Spottsylvania, I am after her—remember that. If you see her before I get her out of the hands of some abominable imp who calls himself, or who is called the hermit of the hills, tell her she is to be my bride, the bride of Captain Sam Sparl. But what ails my pups? Curse it, have they



lost the trail again?" and he wheeled away toward the rear of the cabin, where the hounds were furiously tongueing.

That which now confused the bloodhounds was an even fresher trail crossing the trail of the mad hermit.

The tracks of Norman McLean after he leaped from the window and made off a short distance to a tree, which he climbed and perched himself within, watching to see what might transpire at the cabin.

Seeing that his vicious pets were in a state of bafflement, he stamped about, though careful not to further confuse them by mixing his own tracks with the new ones they were perplexed over, all the while venting a torrent of oaths that were shudderfully audible to those inside the cabin.

"Thank Heaven!" Norman muttered, on his perch. "There is no scent for them at the cabin. They are after the mad hermit again. And now I know that the crazed Callis Grimshaw must still have my darling Ida in his clutches; else why should this wretch, Sparl, be continuing the hunt for him. Can he have murdered her, as he threatened? Forbid such a possibility, oh, God!" and at the terrible thought, his heart almost stood still.

Just then the scene changed.

Both hounds together gave forth a different, a shorter yelp, and darted off side by side through the darkness toward the river, whose waters flowed near.

"Ho!" ejaculated Sparl, who came around at the instant. "If they lost the trail, they have it again. And I must be pretty close to that imp of a hermit who killed one of my men the other night, and whom I have sworn to kill in return. Good! There they go! Do you hear them? Noble pups they are! By the time I come up with them again they will have found and torn into a thousand dangling strips this crazy bug of a man who has made away with my charming Ida Evelyn."

The burly captain, thus muttering, stumbled on after his thirsty hounds—stumbled, for the bandages which almost completely covered his eyes rendered him blind to a certain extent, and rendered him furious, too, for as he collided here and there with a bush or tree, he indulged in a continuous string of invectives that made the very air around him seem warm.

Norman descended from the tree.

He had resolved to keep within hearing of the bloodhounds, theorizing that they, being now apparently so close upon the rear of the madman, were far more likely to lead him to the spot where Ida might be than any search of his own would.

Plainly ahead of him he could hear the bearded and foul mouthed captain following the beasts; and his stumblings, curses and declarations of vengeance for having been led a race of "a thousand miles or more," as he hoarsely growled, were a ready guide to the lover who came behind.

But as he thus proceeded another sound fell upon Norman's ears.

The tramp of horsehoofs and the clank of sabers.

"Ah," he muttered, "it is the same cavalryman with his troopers, who so fortunately arrived at the moment I was about to be burned to death in the log by the same hermit of the hills I am now pursuing. They are coming this way, and will pass between me and Captain Sparl."

The horsemen were very near, and he was compelled to halt to avoid discovery.

Into a little glade rode the cavalry.

"Hark!" spoke the voice of Captain Killbrag. "I hear sounds." The troop came to a standstill.

"Yes, hounds," he added, in a minute. "Now, I know who has



hounds and who is in these woods looking for the lady who is to be my bride—Captain Sam Sparl, of Barksdale's Mississippi brigade. But Ida Evelyn is not for Sam Sparl, not Sam anybody else. Forward! We will follow the sound of the hounds. Malediction! and if you catch sight of the man who is their master"—to those who rode nearest him—"shoot him down. Do you understand? Riddle his body with bullets, every one of you! Follow me."

Turning to one side, he led the way in the track of Sparl and the hounds.

The troopers were now between Norman and the burly, bearded girl hunter.

Again the lover pressed on.

"I must keep near. For I have a feeling that one or the other of these rascals will find Ida, and she will need aid sorely."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### IDA'S CAPTIVITY.

Night of May 12.

It had been in the afternoon of the eighth that Ida was carried off by the mad hermit of the hills, when that weird giant interrupted the duel between the captains, Sparl and Killbrag, dashing the sharpshooters right and left with his powerful arms and the long staff he carried.

Cunning indeed was the underground abode of the hermit.

Thither had he immediately made with his captive, while she lay heavily in her swoon in his arms.

Cunning the hermit, too, for he took a path wherein lay a long and upward slanting log, along which he ran to the further end, and with the agility of a huge ape clambered up into the branches of a convenient tree.

While the riflemen, and Killbrag ahead of them, rushed past the spot he was making in a right-angle way, steadily but safely widening the distance between them and himself, moving from branch to branch high in the air, out of sight because of the foliage.

He used but one hand to gripe each succeeding limb; but the arm with muscles of iron, and the fingers, with leaders of steel, and the great feet, like the feet of a cat, glided surely over his mid-air route, until he was far from the locality where presently the baying hounds of Captain Sparl awoke ominous echoes through the woodland.

No wonder the dogs did not at once fall upon the trail of the strange being.

Not until he had reached a point near his dug-out did he descend from the trees, a matter easily accomplished, so dense grew the timber along the course he pursued.

Ida had not recovered consciousness when at last he dived down the narrow opening to his singular home; and once more the beautiful girl was placed on that pile of ragged blankets in one corner of the earthen floor.

It was ever gloomy there; the light of the floating taper in its little basin of oil was necessary to distinguish the surroundings with any clearness, and this he soon had burning.

Then a heartless precaution did the mad being take against his lovely captive making any effort toward a second escape from his clutches.

There were short pieces of rope strewn within the burrow, and with some of these he roughly proceeded to bind her hand and foot, and, during the operation, his eyes blazed down upon her with the dire hate he felt for the family of Evelyn.

It was this cruel act which brought back by very pain the young girl's senses



With a start she opened her eyes, and gazed in terror up at the fiery orbs above her.

"So you've come to life again, eh?" he hissed. "I am glad of that. I don't want you to die until you die by my hand. And you are to die by my hand! Do you know that, eh?"

"Oh, God, save me!" moaned the suffering girl.

The thongs about her wrists and ankles were cutting into her flesh painfully, and a thrill of horror and hopelessness iced her veins, as she realized that again she was in the power of one who would show no mercy to those who bore the name of Evelyn.

Tighter drew the thongs.

Fiercer blazed the orbs of the hoary-headed hermit, and in the depths of his streaming beard his teeth, white and sharp, were gritting in an infernal grin.

In pain, in desperation, she cried:

"If you mean to kill me, why do you not do so? What have I ever done, that you should wish to torture me so?"

"Kill you I will—ha, ha, ha! But not yet. Torture you? Yes, I shall torture, before I kill, every living soul who bears the hated name you bear. Evelyn—Evelyn—Evelyn!—how I hate—hate—hate it! And your father I shall crush in the earth till he moans out his life—even as he crushed my heart years and years ago and ground me down—down until I seemed to pass out of this world and into another where there is always and ever a seething fire burning here," smiting his half-bare breast. "Oh, you think I am a crazy man? Well, so I am—I am wild—wild for revenge; I will have blood—blood from the accursed veins of all who are named Evelyn—and more blood from the dwellers of the earth that has become a hell to me because I am a hunter and hunted of mankind. Rivers of blood are to flow—not by cannon or musket or pistol, but by these arms—these!" and he raised and shook his hairy, brawny arms aloft in a tremble of frenzy.

Chill after chill coursed through the pulse of the terrified girl, as the wronged man, Callis Grimshaw, seemed for the moment transformed into a demon even more hideous than he usually appeared.

Suddenly he said:

"You are my prisoner till the time comes to kill you. I shall guard against your giving any outcry to bring another rescuer here. One came—you remember? Ha, ha, ha! Now, then, let me fit this into your pretty mouth."

With which, and before she divined his intention, he roughly inserted and secured a gag in her mouth.

"There, you are bound and gagged. Ho, ho! there's no danger, but I'll have you for a sacrifice when the right time comes. Now I must be off. I'll come back to feed you and give you drink. I must have my toll of blood from those who swarm in the woods—my woods—my retreat this is, and I shall kill all I can of those who come here."

He was gone.

How paint, how write the picture of the horror that settled upon the poor girl, thus bound and gagged, hidden in the cunningly contrived abode of the human monster who promised to return and murder her when he deemed it the proper moment?

As he vanished, he paused outside to gather some rubbish and cast it in a disordered pile before the entrance, thus even better concealing his underground place of abiding.

The dim taper in its basin of oil burned dully on, and silence reigned about her, till her overwrought mind grew giddy with the horrible thoughts that fastened upon her in her helplessness.

The madman was in a strangely gay humor after leaving his burrow, which he did in the same manner by which he came,



climbing up into the trees and only descending again when a considerable distance from the spot where his captive was concealed.

He could hear the baying of Captain Sparl's hounds, and pausing long enough to locate them, he started off as if to deliberately throw himself in their way.

This was easily accomplished, and then followed a remarkable chase, in which the cunning of the madman was really superior to both the speed and scent of the savage brutes.

When night came down and Sparl had not so much as caught a glimpse of the man he was pursuing, the hermit returned to his burrow and relieved Ida of the cruel bonds and the gag.

As she was freed, she fainted. He revived her speedily, and when she was able to sit up, and before she could find breath to utter a word, he broke forth, gayly :

"I have had a nice time off in the woods. But I didn't get any blood. I would like to draw some blood. Oh, I live for blood! Now I will give you something to eat."

"Water!" gasped the girl, her throat so parched that she could scarcely articulate the word.

Just without the narrow opening to the burrow was a trickling spring. Hastening to this, he filled a gourd with water and held it to her lips, for it really seemed to her that she had not power enough after her terrible ordeal to help herself.

Then from some receptacle he brought forth a supply of coarse food and pressed it upon her, though her attempt to eat nearly resulted in choking her.

"Heaven aid me!" she moaned in her bursting heart. "Am I to be held thus for awhile, and then at last mercilessly slaughtered by this monster in human shape? Oh, Norman, where are you at this minute? Dead—dead! shot down by that fiend, Captain Killbrag. Alas, I am ready to die too!"

For she fully believed that when she saw her lover fall by the bullet, undoubtedly fired by Captain Killbrag, he was killed outright.

Thus did the maniac keep her, returning at intervals to supply her with food and drink, and never neglecting to bind her hand and foot before leaving her.

But she was spared the infliction of the gag; she begged so piteously, with promises to remain quiet and make no outcry with the view to bring help.

The maniac, strangely, did not hesitate to take her word.

But despite her promise it was impossible to keep back the sobs that forced themselves from her quivering lips as she lay there on the pile of blankets, waiting, for what?

The arrival of the moment when her tormentor would say :

"Your time has come; prepare to die!"

Desperate indeed was her strait, and it was a singular circumstance that Norman McLean, whom we know to be alive and filled with anguish at being unable to trace out his betrothed, had never once thought of looking in that hole in the ground where he had first seen and rescued Ida from the madman.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### TREEING THE MAD HERMIT.

When the morning of the twelfth had arrived, Ida was so exhausted by the terrible suffering she had endured that she lay pale and wan on the blanket pile.

"Kill me," she said, to her tormentor. "I would rather die than endure this longer. Either kill me at once, or do not bind me with the ropes again. I cannot survive this much longer."



Her mind was in a whirl, a feverish weakness, in which she really would have preferred death to the excruciating agony of the hours of bondage to which she was being subjected.

The maniac surveyed her critically.

He must have seen that she could not sustain much more of the outrageous treatment which he was heaping upon her, and, perhaps, something of the better nature that might have been his in other years for a moment rose uppermost within him.

"You are trying to trick me," he said, warily. "You want me to leave you free, and while I am absent you will steal off."

"Indeed I will remain here the same as if you bound me hand and foot, as you have done for days past."

His unexpected words had roused some faint hope in her breast, and eagerly she made the declaration.

"You are looking for the return of that one who came once before and snatched you away from me."

"Hear me!" she cried, faintly, pleadingly; "if you will not put those cruel ropes on me, I solemnly swear to you that I will not pass beyond that opening while you are absent. Only let me have liberty of limb. Oh, I shall die if I have to go through this much longer. Grant me this mercy, I beg of you. It is little to grant one who, you say, is doomed."

"Aha! and knowing that you are doomed," he said, with a quick sharpness, "you will fling that promise to the winds the minute I am out of sight, and spread your wings for flight."

"Look at me; do I look like one who could flee from you," she returned, bitterly, and her voice almost breaking in a sob.

There was no softness in the speech of the mad hermit, no relenting in those gleaming orbs; but he saw that the girl was utterly broken down and incapable of carrying out a plan of flight, even had she contemplated such a thing.

"If I show you the mercy you ask—a mercy I ought not to show any one bearing the name of Evelyn—you will give me a sacred promise not to leave this place while I am absent?"

"Yes, I promise—I swear it!"

She meant the solemn words, and gazed imploringly up at the fiendish countenance of her captor.

"Very well," he said, in a slow and calculating tone. "I will risk it. I will not bind you. But mark you, pretty babe;" and he glared so savagely upon her that she shrank in her heart, "if you deceive me, it would be better for you if you had never been born; for I will get you again, remember, I will get you, and the torture you have passed through will be Heaven compared to what I shall then inflict. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she replied faintly.

A few minutes afterward she was alone, and for the first time since she had been the captive of the fiendish hermit, she was spared the cutting misery of the knotted ropes.

The thunders of the battle which opened on that foggy morning where plainly audible to the captive in the burrow; the ground beneath her was trembling with the reverberations of the heavy and continuous discharges.

Once she ventured to the opening, but returned to the further side of the cramped compartment, murmuring:

"Nay, I must not even expose myself to the possibility of being seen by some outside; for though it was a horrible promise to be compelled to give, having given it, I shall keep it, no matter what may transpire. Even if Norman came here to me, I would not go with him during the absence of the captor who has only shown me this mercy of freedom on my word of honor not to escape. But why do I speak of Norman? Ah, Heaven! he is dead, and I feel that I shall never see him more!" and giving way to her feelings,



she burst forth in a torrent of grief, hiding her face in her hands to weep hot tears.

The hermit was off on a bloody expedition.

Both armies then being on the move toward that gradual concentration more to eastward of Spottsylvania Court House, only stragglers were to be found in the immediate vicinity of our drama, and many a poor soul on that day, though deeming himself safe from death by being removed from the vortex of guns and steel, met a doom at the mad hermit's hands, to be named simply in the after records of the battle as "missing."

Coming upon the little band of stragglers we mentioned in chapter nineteen, and finding them in a condition nigh to helplessness, because of their over free imbibing from the poisonous whisky keg, he dashed among them, and, notwithstanding the uselessness of one arm which he carried in a sling—the result of Captain Killbrag's revolver shot—he flayed about among them, with his stout staff first, and afterward one of his huge and murderous knives, until only a heap of ghastly dead men remained as evidences of his presence.

In coming upon this toll of victims, he had seen the Unionist, Norman McLean, just as the latter was drawing his last leg within the hollow log, and having satisfied his thirst for blood among the Confederate stragglers, he returned to carry out the diabolical plan of burning the hiding man alive.

But the arrival of Killbrag and his troopers interfered with this.

And as they were between him and his rabbit-like burrow, he was forced to flee for his own life in a direction opposite, hotly pursued by the troopers and the irate captain.

During the remainder of that day, while the din of battle rolled over and filled with rumbling echoes the depths of the gloomy chaparral, the hermit's usual favorable luck seemed to desert him, for hour after hour passed, and round and round he doubled and ran, and still some blind chance appeared to keep the troopers on his trail.

Try as he did, time and again, he could not manage so as to reach the fallen log whence it was his custom to gain the tree boughs and escape through the air, as it were, to his well-hidden refuge.

Night came down, and still he was being hunted, though he finally succeeded in putting a considerable distance between himself and those who were scouring in his rear.

"Oh, that there were but half a dozen only—or a score!" he cried, gnashingly, shaking his bare and hairy arms aloft in the darkness as he plunged onward. "I would not flee thus, no, no! I am a match for a score; and I could strike, kill, have blood, more blood to fill my cup of vengeance!"

Then he suddenly dashed away with renewed vigor of limb, for a sound came to him that was more to be dreaded than the tramping horse hoofs of the troopers who had been and were following him so persistently through even the intricate tangles of the timber.

The bay of bloodhounds.

The same notes he had defied successfully some days previous. But now they seemed to send a terror into his heart.

On, on, he sped, at times taking monstrous leaps, hoping thereby to break the trail which he knew those sure-scented beasts were following.

It was as he bounded onward after hearing this indication of other and more to be feared pursuers, that he came upon the cabin of the negress Deborah.

By slightly turning his hoary head, as he passed, he could see within the room where were congregated our characters.



Then to a full stop he came, and his eyes blazed in the darkness like the orbs of a jungle beast.

He saw there the man he hated above all men on earth.

Notwithstanding the nearness of the hounds, he took time to run back to one window of the cabin.

Pausing for a second to make sure that the party he looked in upon was Jacob Evelyn, he drew one of the knives from his girdle—knives that he could hurl with such deadly aim, as we have seen—and balancing it in his fingers, he cast it at the head of his intended victim, accompanying the throw with a dire-breathed but inaudible curse.

Perhaps his excitement, resulting from the long and now dangerously closing chase, had spoiled his wonderful nerve, for the whizzing blade missed its mark, burying itself in the logs.

Not waiting to see the result of his murderous attempt upon Evelyn's life, he again bounded forward, heading for the river, and hoping in the waters, to throw the baying hounds off the scent.

When Sparl reached the river's edge with his ferocious pups he showed, by his immediate action, that he was no novice in handling the terrible bloodhound of the South.

The animals showed that they were well trained for the man-hunt.

A few words of command to his red-fanged pets, and they separated, one taking a northward course along the bank of the river and the other going southward.

The first soon gave the yelping signal that told the trail was once more found, and after him stamped the burly captain, urging him on encouragingly, while he called forward the other.

"Flame and brimstone!" he snarled. "I'll have you presently, you imp of a hermit. I know that my dogs are close on you now. And they shall tear you into a million particles. I swear!"

When Killbrag reached the river, following the sound of Sparl and his hounds, he called a halt.

"Dismount!" was the order he gave, in a tone and manner that savored very little of his military habit. "And four of you—you four," indicating those he meant, "come with me. We can accomplish our object better without horses now. I know by those sounds—for I have heard bloodhounds before—that the dogs must be close upon the quarry. And I know who is setting them on—another man who has laid claim to the young lady I have made oath shall be my bride. Come, move fast, here."

On foot himself, and followed by the troopers he had selected, he hurried on in the direction taken by Sparl, and where could be heard the baying, yelping, savage barking of the exultant hounds, who seemed to enjoy the near prospect of sinking their massive fangs in the flesh of the one they hunted.

Now not far ahead, on, on, sped the closely pressed hermit.

Rage and apprehension were contorting his features, as he ran faster than any ordinary man ever could have run.

As he began to realize that the race must soon terminate in his being completely cornered, he broke forth in hisses, with grinding teeth, and his fists clinched till the long nails sunk into the palms of his horny hands.

The maniac, knife in hand, was speeding toward his burrow, to sacrifice her innocent life in his limitless thirst for vengeance upon the Evelyns.

Matters in the timber suddenly became mixed.

Sparl caught the sound of others coming on in his rear.

They were almost upon him ere he discovered the fact, and a voice which he heard caused him to leap lumberingly aside in the darkness to avoid being collided with.



"On here!" snapped the voice. "Malediction! we cannot have much further to go, judging by the notes of those hounds—hounds belonging to a man I shall kill if I ever come up with him. Faster!"

"Ho! flay him!" muttered the surprised Captain Sparl. "There is the trooper captain. I can't see him, but I know his voice well enough. Fury and earth! you will kill me, eh? We'll see about that. But he is not alone. I must be careful what I do. Fat of misfortune! he is now between me and the dogs."

Slipping out from behind the tree when the others had passed, he moved stealthily in their rear.

Only a short distance ahead, the tongueing hounds were now making a furious racket.

And in the rear of all was the lover, Norman McLean.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### NORMAN FIRST AT THE GOAL.

Notwithstanding the dense darkness, Norman made a discovery which caused him to exclaim:

"Ah! why did I not think of this before? I now know where the madman is making for; and a few moments of careful thought would have enabled me, long ere this, to find my darling Ida."

He had recognized the locality as that where he had first providentially found his betrothed when Callis Grimshaw took her to his burrow abode.

Now he pushed on with a hopeful heart—pushed on, but by a detour that would bring him to the hermit's cleverly concealed home before the others reached it.

Baying at a fearful rate were the hounds.

Ida heard the ominous sound as she stood shrinkingly within the underground place, and with nerves at a tension she listened, wondering if the animals would be likely to discover and pounce upon her, for she little dreamed that they were actually following a trail that would lead them directly to her on the heels of her captor.

And while she stood, with one hand over her palpitating heart, suddenly into her presence burst the hermit.

His white locks and beard were streaming behind him; his eyes, ever glaringly fiery, were fairly blazing now, and he held half aloft the sharp edged and shining knife

"Prepare, prepare!" he cried, hoarsely, as he came leaping toward her.

Involuntarily a shriek burst from her lips.

"Your time has come!" he panted, halting before her with a demoniac scowl, though his teeth glistened behind his parted lips in the depths of his snowy beard in an infernal grin.

"Your time has come. You are to die. Say your prayers, babe!"

"In the name of God, I beg you spare me," screamed the recoiling girl.

"I spare none of the hated name of Evelyn. Hark! do you hear that noise? They are after me. They will soon be here. But they will not be in time to cheat me of my vengeance! Oho! I burned a man to death to-day. I think he was the same who came here and took you away before; do you remember him? A lover, may be. He is burned to a coal. Ha, ha, ha! And I have slain your father with one of my never failing knives. Oho! I am having my vengeance, if they are coming to make me a prisoner—kill me, perhaps. But before I die, I will slay another of the hated name of Evelyn! Prepare, prepare!"

With a quick step he was by her side, and rudely grasped one of her wrists.



To her knees sunk the horrified girl, and another scream rung in the small underground compartment.

"Spare me! oh, for the love of Heaven, spare me!" she cried, raising her free arm above her head as if to ward off the expected blow, and her beautiful eyes distended and fixed on the awful blade that poised in the relentless gripe of the madman.

"Spare you! spare an Evelyn? No!"

"I never did you harm. I am innocent! Spare me!" gasped Ida.

Steadily he poised the knife, seeming to select the mark in that innocent bosom before him ere he drove the steel home.

Another instant, and the keen point would pierce the shrinking flesh, the rich red blood would flow, and life would be over for Ida Evelyn.

At that critical juncture something entered at the narrow entrance of the burrow.

Something that came with a fierce snarl and yelp, and hurled itself upon the tall figure of the hermit.

One of the bloodhounds.

Outstripping its companion in the chase, it arrived first at the end of the long trail.

Now, and in the nick of time to preserve Ida from the stab of the steel, it bounded like some huge and glossy ball through the air, and its fangs fastened deep in the shoulder of its hunted quarry, near the neck.

Uttering his habitual screech of unearthly tenor, Callis Grimshaw turned to combat with this formidable adversary.

Hard tore the teeth, from behind which came continually the surly growlings of the beast who could not be wrenched from his hold; and round and about staggered the man, giant though he was, from the shock of the onslaught and weighed down by the savage hound.

Twice, thrice his knife—the knife intended for Ida's bosom—struck into the shaggy sides, and slashed again and again around the neck and over the head of the fast-holding beast.

Not until it was nearly flayed into strips did the trained animal release his prey; and when he did, and though he fell quivering at the hermit's feet, he still snapped viciously and endeavored to renew the combat.

Not much of a respite did the madman have when he was freed from the lacerating jaws.

In through the opening came the second hound.

Larger, fiercer, more used to combat where there is a resistance, was this one.

With a cunning almost human it made a bounding feint, dropped short, and as the stroke of the knife aimed at it cut through empty air, suddenly it uprose like a rocket in agility, and the long, rabid teeth were sunk fairly into the throat of the hoary-headed Hercules.

In the agony of that awful rending bite, the man for the moment forgot to retain his hold on the knife, the only weapon that could have done him any good, and with both hands he gripped the dog at the massive neck, striving to tear him away.

Then down to the earth and floor went man and hound, over and over in the terrible struggle, in which the latter seemed to have the best of it.

Fiercely tore the fangy jaws, through flesh and sinew.

There was a deluge of blood and the sound of a voice that tried to cry out, but was smothered and gurgling.

Ida had staggered back to the wall, gazing transfixed upon the shocking sight.

And at the instant when it seemed that the bloodhound would



tear the floored man's head completely from the bleeding trunk, another form came in through the opening of the burrow.

Norman McLean.

"Norman! Norman!" screamed the girl, recognizing with an indescribable thrill the lover she had believed to be dead.

She made a movement to hasten to his side.

But Norman saw the danger to the hermit, and had reasons for wishing to preserve his life—at least until he could die with the knowledge that Jacob Evelyn had done him no wrong.

Promptly leveling his revolver, he fired.

Hasty though the aim, it was true.

The dog uttered a yelp and let go his hold upon his victim.

Wheeling upon the one who had given him his death wound, he made as if to spring and give this second enemy battle.

But the revolver cracked again, and down went the bloody jowled animal in the last throes.

"Ida!" he then exclaimed, opening his arms to the eager girl.

In a moment she was clasped tightly there.

Only for a moment.

Then Norman was reminded that there were other foes in close proximity.

"Forward here!" sounded a harsh, snappish voice outside.

The voice of Captain Killbrag.

Releasing her, Norman leaped to the doorless doorway and looked forth.

Against the background formed by the waters of the river, he could discern several forms advancing toward the spot.

"Forward!" said Killbrag's voice again. "I think I heard something like a struggle up here. The abominable madman may be strangling my charming Ida. Hurry!"

"Halt!"

The command rung quite unexpectedly in the captain's ears, and he knew that it was not the hermit who uttered the challenge.

"Hello, there?" he called, coming to a stop.

"Well, what is wanted?" demanded Norman, sharply.

"Ho! Who are you?"

"No matter who I am. What do you want? Halt! Not one step further, on your life."

As the young man spoke he was attracted by a cry from Ida.

Turning quickly, he was startled by a fearful sight.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### DEATH OF THE MAD HERMIT.

As the hermit had rolled over on his back, after the hound loosed the hold upon his throat, and lay stiffly still, Norman had thought that he was dead; and the sound of the voice of another enemy outside had prevented his making any examination to ascertain whether or not this was the case.

Now, when he heard Ida's low cry, he turned to behold the madman raised upon one elbow.

At the moment Norman's attention was attracted, the hermit was making an effort to crawl toward the couple, and this in a horribly suggestive manner.

He had recovered the long bladed knife. With the knife in one hand, he was digging it into the earthen floor ahead of him, and dragging his body, weak from the loss of blood, in their direction, as if he sought, even in his dying moment to reach and kill the girl who bore the—to him—hated name of Evelyn.

From his drawn back lips, he hissed through the bloody beard;

"Vengeance! I will have my vengeance!"



"Callis Grimshaw, hold there. Here me for a word——"

"Who calls Callis Grimshaw?" demanded the maniac, frenziedly.

"I do. Listen to me. You are wrong in your hate of Jacob Evelyn. He never did you harm——"

"A lie! A lie, I say! Jacob Evelyn it was who destroyed my home and drove me from the haunts of men to become a beast, a wanderer on the face of the earth, to hide in a hole like the hunted fox. A lie, I say!"

"Before high Heaven I swear that you are wrong. If you will hear me for a minute, I can convince you——"

"I have no minutes to spare. I am dying—and before I die I will have the blood of another Evelyn!" again interrupted the unfortunate crazy man.

Whatever Norman might have said further, it was prevented by a call from Captain Killbrag.

"Ho, there! Well, I have halted as you commanded. But I shall not stay here long, mind that. Malediction! I am after a lady who was carried off by a lunatic who is, I think, in where you are, whoever you are. And by the dragon of George, I will have her. Is she in there?"

"There is a lady here, and I am her protector, remember that."

"Her protector? Ho! and who the devil may you be, anyhow?"

"One whom you had best not tempt too far by offering her harm. Begone from here, or I shall let drive a bullet into you!"

Norman spoke in a tone that could not be mistaken for an idle threat; and the captain appeared to comprehend it, for he lost no time in sheltering his body behind a convenient tree, after which precaution he called out again:

"You, up there?"

"Well?"

"Do you know who I am?"

"Yes. Captain Jonathan Killbrag, of Stuart's cavalry. A cowardly villain and woman hunter."

At this bold rejoinder the captain uttered a rageful cry.

But he kept his precious body well out of sight.

"Do not anger him unnecessarily, Norman," Ida said.

"I do not fear him, nor all the troop he has with him," returned the lover, who half felt that he had played the coward himself in more than one instance since he first met his betrothed in not having protected her from the danger in which he had now again found her.

The hotter blood of his nature was getting the better of his will.

"Have no fear, Ida," he said. "We can beat back the whole troop of this Captain Killbrag. And if he tarries here very long, in the vain hope of starving us out, I may prophesy that he will find himself a prisoner within the lines of the Union army."

Both were attracted again at this juncture to the hermit.

Callis Grimshaw vented a sound that was a combined gasp and grunt, and then rolled out full length and rigid upon the floor.

"He is dead," the young man said.

Ida averted her head with a shudder.

"Malediction!" snapped the voice of Captain Killbrag, outside. "Are you going to give me the young lady I know is in that pest of a hole?"

"I will give you a shower of bullets if you attempt to come so much as a yard nearer," was the lover's reply.

This set Killbrag to thinking.

A shower of bullets. Whoever this champion might be, then, he could not be alone.

Else how could he send a "shower of bullets," Then he cried to his men:



"One of you go back to the rest of the company. Bring them all here. Malediction! I will rout this man and whoever is with him out of that in a twinkling. Hasten!"

And he called out to Norman:

"You hear? I have sent after a whole troop. In a few minutes I will drag you out of there. And I shall skin you alive, I promise you that."

"Try it," retorted the young man, bravely.

And he said, to Ida:

"Bring me those revolvers I see sticking from the belt of yonder dead man, if you have the nerve——"

She started to obey almost before he had finished.

Norman presently found himself armed with five heavy revolvers besides his own trusty weapon, and as he counted the chambers he murmured:

"There are enough bullets here to lay out a whole troop, if I am careful to make every shot tell, and if they do not all charge at once. And even if they do charge all at once, not more than two at a time can enter at this opening; so I think I will pile up a rampart of dead men before they get us, Ida."

"Oh, Norman, how terrible!" she exclaimed, suppressedly, glancing into his grim face not without some misgivings for the end of this scene.

Hardly had she uttered the words, when there was a report and a carbine bullet went whizzing past their heads.

"Ah, I forgot; the light!"

Stepping back, he blew the flame of the taper out at a whiff.

"I should have thought of that before. We have been in great danger. Now we are safe, if we keep out of range through the opening, and we can see our enemies better, too."

A moment after he exclaimed hurriedly:

"Look! the woods are on fire!"

There was a dull glare suddenly in the sky overhead, as from a fire that seemed to grow brighter every second.

A commotion was visible among the besiegers.

"We'd best be getting out of this, captain," Norman heard one of the troopers say.

"Malediction!" gritted the voice of Killbrag. "Yes, we will be burned alive if we stay. But I hate to let that girl slip through my fingers when I almost have her."

Then Norman could discern their figures moving away toward the river.

Brighter grew the glare in the heavens.

"Norman," Ida's voice was trembling, "is it true? Are the woods on fire?"

"I fear so."

"What will become of us here?"

"Have faith in the goodness of Heaven. See, yonder are some blankets. Bring them to me."

When she had brought the ragged blankets to him, he first peered cautiously forth to see if the troopers were in sight, then he glided from the opening.

"Norman," she called, with some apprehension, "where are you going? Do not leave me——"

"Sh! Be still. I am not going away," and he disappeared.

Only for a few moments, and when he joined her, he carried the blankets on his arm, dripping with water from the spring so fortunately close by.

His object was soon apparent.

With her aid he fastened the wet blankets closely across the small opening, saying:

"That will keep out the smoke. I do not think the heat will



penetrate here. The gourd I saw; can you find it? We may need water to drink. The fire is sweeping this way, Ida; but fear not, I think we are safe."

With the gourd filled with water and the blankets hung and dripping, they waited the coming of the fire,

Soon the roar of the flames could be heard, then louder, as the torrent came upon the spot in a mighty surge.

But the furious element spent itself at the river side, and only the fall of branches sounded without, crackling as they crashed to the ground in a blazing scatter of sparks.

"It is over—the worst," the lover said; and he was rising from the corner whither they had withdrawn when there was an occurrence of a most startling character.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### A TRIUMPH OF HEARTS.

Into the presence of Norman and Ida dashed something that was hardly distinguishable as a man at first—a human being whose hair, beard and garments were entirely ablaze.

A very pyramid of fire he seemed, with sparks flying in every direction, and the envelopment of the smoke almost hiding the upper portion of his body.

Out from the depths of this frightfully burning object issued a cry that was a howl of intense agony and terror.

"Ho! fury and earth! I am burning up! I am a dead man! I am swallowing flame and smoke! Help! Save me, somebody!"

The last words were a shriek in a hoarse, bellowing accent.

It was Captain Sam Sparl.

As the two stood for a moment transfixed by the shudderful sight of the consuming man, Sparl reeled about blindly, roaring and gasping, then fell in a blazing heap upon the floor.

Groan after groan came from his scorched lips.

A hideous spectacle of death!

He had been caught in the burning woods.

He had been a hidden listener to the short syllabled dialogue between Captain Killbrag and the party, unknown to him, within the secret cave of the hermit.

When Killbrag and his trooper companions drew off to escape the coming fire, Sparl had no alternative but to flee directly into the onward surging element, or follow after and into their midst.

Scooping with his sword a hollow at the roots of a large tree, he had half buried himself in the hope that he could survive; but it was a vain and foolish hope, for he was soon overcome nigh to death, and at last, encompassed by a sheet of flame, he bounded up, resolved to dare an encounter with whoever was in the burrow.

But by the time he had found the narrow opening affording an entrance to it, he had inhaled the fire, and knew that he was a dead man.

So much had he inhaled, that he expired in a few minutes, though Norman, in merest humanity, endeavored to relieve the suffering man who was a foe to him and the young girl so dear to his heart.

A miserable death for Captain Sparl.

Norman, glancing around upon the dead bodies of the hermit, the two hounds, and the scarcely recognized Sparl—for he had relighted the taper—said:

"Come, Ida, let us go away from this sight. It is sickening to me."

"Is it safe for us to venture forth?"



"I really believe that no better opportunity could be afforded than now. The troopers have no doubt been driven some distance from here; by the time the furthest limit of the fire has reached where they are, this vicinity will permit of our traversing it. Come."

Hand in hand they passed out.

A wreck of forest was before them.

Where so shortly previous had been a rich and beautiful stretch of verdure, was now only a charred waste, wherein glowed the lingering embers of the stripped and blackened trees, round which still licked the stray and darting flames.

Fortunately, the belt of the fire had been limited.

They had not far to go to get out of the heated atmosphere.

But as the flames had made a turn in the impetus of their sweep down stream, Killbrag and his men had been obliged to go, as Norman predicted, a considerable distance to save themselves from being engulfed.

When it was safe to return, the trooper captain hastened back to his former position near the burrow.

"Hello!" he called. "Are you alive up there?"

There was no response, of course; for Norman and Ida were then nearly a mile away from the spot.

"Malediction! have you come safely out of this abominable fire? Speak, you, up there in that hole!" he shouted again.

Still no response.

"They are either dead, or——"

An idea of an annoying possibility came to him.

"What if they have both survived and made off?" he questioned himself, with an oath. "By the dragon of George! I will soon know. Yes."

At this juncture his troopers, till now kept back by the fire, came up.

Striding forward to the cavalcade he gave some quick orders, and a score of the men threw themselves from their saddles, drawing their sabers as if about to charge a large and ambushed foe.

After a few words more, Killbrag did cry:

"Charge! Now, then, charge!"

Up over the slight rise of ground, over embers and burning sod rushed pell-mell the troopers toward the burrow.

They reached and crowded into the place, where the dull taper burned in its basin of oil.

Only the corpses which we know to have been there met their gaze, as one after another crowded in at the opening until the small compartment was full to a jam.

Last of all came Captain Killbrag.

The warmth of the air without was scarcely greater than the heat of his oaths of chagrin and rage when he realized that his prey had escaped.

"Boots and saddles!" he vociferated. "Malediction! After them! After the girl who is to be my bride! After the man, whoever he may be, who is aiding her to elude me! Satan! if you catch the latter, a pile of money to the one who cuts off his ears! A pile of money to the one who brings me his eyes on a saber point! A pile of money to the one who chops off his arms and legs, who skins him alive, who—— Malediction! be off! Follow me!"

In a frenzy of barbarous rage he led the way back to the horses, and, at another command, the troopers separated into pairs and trios to hunt the fleeing couple.

No tracks were there in that dismantled woods. No clew to the course pursued by the devoted lovers.

Though Killbrag and his men hunted like animals, with eye and ear, Providence guided Norman and Ida safely away from the en-



viron of danger, toward the cabin where the father and mother, with anxious hearts, were in prayerful waiting for some tidings of their child.

"I have confidence in Mr. McLean," the old gentleman had said to his wife. "I believe he will find Ida if mortal man can do so."

"And why are you so confident in him, Jacob? Who is this Mr. McLean? I have never heard of him before, and yet you seem to know him well."

For a few moments Jacob hesitated.

Then he said:

"I will tell you, Martha, who he is."

As Mrs. Evelyn lay there on the couch, listening with a grave interest, he told what he knew of the former meeting of Ida and Norman in the North, and their secret betrothal.

"I have so much faith in the goodness of our daughter," he said, in conclusion, "that I must believe Mr. McLean to be a man of integrity. He is, too, connected with a prominent detective firm in Philadelphia he tells me, and his standing is, therefore, open to the fullest investigation."

"But he is a Northerner, Jacob."

"Ah, Martha, I am sure you love our Ida too well to allow so small a matter as that to interfere with her happiness."

"Love her!" repeated the mother, with emotion. "Oh, Jacob, if Heaven will only give her back to me."

Little could she dream that at that very moment Ida was speeding toward her, eager to be embraced once more by the loving arms.

Suddenly into the cabin ran a female form, and a dear, familiar voice cried, broken with a great sob:

"Father—mother!"

"Ida! my child!" burst from both the overjoyed parents.

"Bress de lamb 'r Israel, she done come at las'!" cried old Deborah, throwing up her black hands and partaking of the gladness of the others.

Close behind came Norman.

When the parents had embraced the recovered loved one, Jacob Evelyn advanced and grasped Norman's hand:

"May God bless you, sir," he said.

Mrs. Evelyn, ignoring the fact that the young man was one of those whom she hated as she did all who were of the North, also extended a hand, adding to her husband's words:

"Amen to that."

But no time was to be lost there.

The woods were full of those who were enemies to Norman, and the dreaded Captain Killbrag was prosecuting his search for the young girl he was determined to make his wife, or, mayhap, worse.

As Mrs. Evelyn persisted that she was capable of some exertion, they left Deborah's cabin just before daybreak, and crossed the Po, going cautiously northward.

Of the trials they endured in making their way to absolute safety—which they at last found in the city of Washington—we need make no detail at this late paragraph.

Safe they finally were, and wedded were the couple whose adventures we have chronicled as one of the unwritten dramas mingled in the terrible time of Spottsylvania.

Of Captain Killbrag nothing more was ever heard, for that valiant ruffian was mortally wounded in a passage at arms between his troopers and a portion of Sheridan's cavalry at Meadow Bridge.

[THE END.]



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